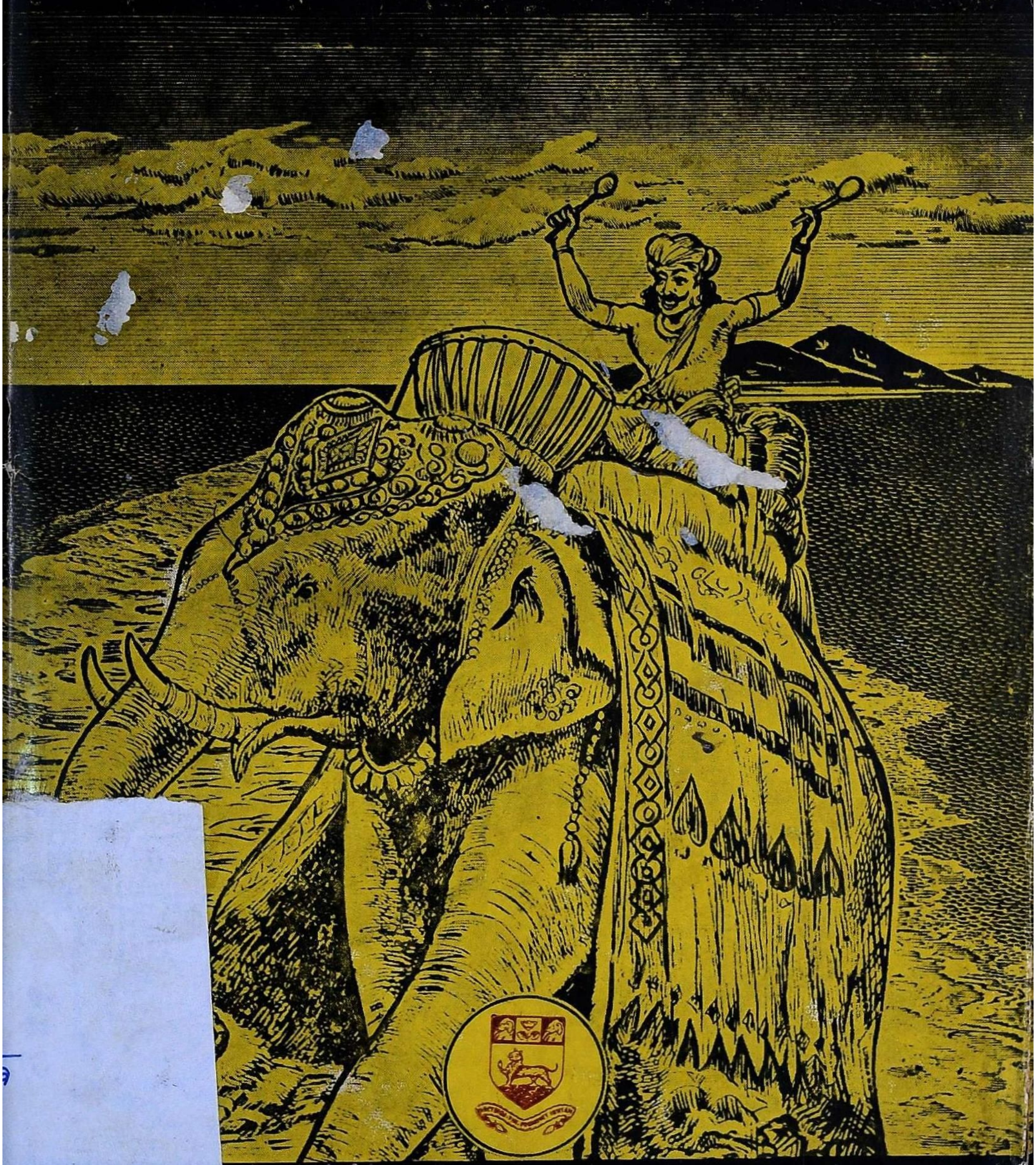
THE CLASSICAL AGE OF THE TAMILS

M. AROKIASWAMI, M.A., Ph.D.,



UNIVERSITY OF MADRAS

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The author **Dr M. Arokiaswami** was born on June 25, 1911, in Somanur, a small village in the District of Coimbatore. He entered the school as an average boy and emerged as an outstanding student from St. Joseph's College, Trichy. He choose the noble profession of teaching and began his career in the Pachaiyappa's College, Madras. He worked to rise to the coveted position of the Head of the Department of Indian History, Madras University, just two years earlier to his death. (18—11—1968)

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BY

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UNIVERSITY OF MADRAS

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PREFACE

This small work is on a great subject fundamental to a knowledge of early South Indian history. It deals with the well-known Sangam age, its poetry and poets, its economic and political conditions and above all with its society and culture. The term "classical age" fits in aptly not only because it deals with poets of great literary excellence but also because it was a period of Greek and Roman connections with South India, of a period when Roman soldiers and merchants filled the great cities of the Tamils.

It is a little more than fifty years since the literary treasure of the ancient Tamils have been discovered and much good use has been made of them by scholars both literary and historical. Yet many fundamental points have been left undecided. I have taken up these questions and arrived at conclusions which, it is hoped, would appeal to scholars. Far too long have they been hanging in fire, and the sooner we come to some settlement on them the better it would be for the history of South India. I am glad that I have been able to undertake this study in keeping with the traditions of the Department of Indian history of this University from whence have gone out into the world many such small studies on great subjects like Stone age in South India, South India in the age of the Mantras and Origin and spread of the Tamils.

My thanks are due to the authorities of the University for getting this work published. I sincerely thank my student Mr. A. Kesavan M.A., M.Litt. who is at persent working as lecturer in history in Pachaiyappas College, Kanchipuram for seeing through the proofs and preparing the index. My thanks are also due to Mr. A. Sampath and the Super Power Press for executing this work neatly.

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INTRODUCTION

The period of the Śaṅgams is now recognized by historians and Indologists to be the classical age of the Tamils analogous to the age of thc classics in Greece and Rome and to that of the later Renaissance in Europe. It is now but half a century since the precious literary finds of this period have been discovered from various places in South India, where they had been kept by individual families literally laid under the dust of time and oblivion and even within this short space of time they have gained such fame and popularity that in some ways their evidence constitutes the best known age of South Indian History. Great credit is due to those indefatigable savants of whom special mention must be made of Dr. U. V. Swaminatha Iyer, who rescued most of the manuscripts from oblivion and possible destruction.

This classical age of the Tamils is, not only by the consensus of learned opinion but also as proved by indisputable evidence, assigned to the first few centuries before and after the commencement of the Christian era. The literature produced by the Tamils of that age is known as the Śaṅgam literature and that literature itself proves the high antiquity of Tamil culture. The Tamils who produced a literature, which reflects a fairly advanced material culture, should have inherited it over a period of not less than a millennium. So it will not be wrong to deduce that Tamil culture in the Tamil country did take root earlier than 1000 B.C. There are even indications, though dim and inferential, that the culture which they transmitted to posterity was not of a mere localised nature. It was pervasive and prevailed over a much wider area than even the land that we now call India. Most scholars are now tending to the view that the Dravidians had

proto-historic connections with peoples of the eastern Mediterranean region. The well known affinity between the Sumerians and the Harappans of the Indus valley as also Fr. Heras' gallant attempts to connect the authors of the Indus valley culture with the proto-Dravidians are pointers at least to the wide-spread nature of that culture.

The argument that the Dravidians were the most ancient natives of India and had peopled South India from the very beginning is, however, difficult to sustain. There are many racial strains in South India and descendants of groups perceptibly more primitive and indicative of a much earlier stage in civilization than that of the Dravidians. The possible connection between the Indus valley culture and the Dravidians and the proved contacts between them and the eastern Mediterranean culture are themselves additional supports to the view that the Dravidians were only the second layer of the population in India.

Most of the arguments to support the thesis that the Indus culture was Dravidian have been presented with considerable scholarship by Fr. Heras in his valuable work on the Indus valley civilization. He bases his views on an analysis of evidence adduced from three points of view: 1) That the Indus valley script so far undeciphered can be made to yield some meaning if the ideas expressed in the symbols are taken to stand for proto-Dravidian idea-symbols, like 'āṅ', 'ūr', 'vēl' etc. 2) The evidence of religion in the Indus valley helps us to equate the linga found there with the proto-Dravidian Śiva and also connects, 'Pāśupatēśvara' with the later worship of of that God. 3) The highly material civilization of the Indus valley bereft of any marked religious or spiritual tinge is reminiscent not only of ancient Sumerian culture but also of later Dravidian culture. Still it is by no means possible to categorically assert that the Indus valley Culture was Dravidian or that its language was proto-Tamil though it cannot be, however, gainsaid that some

probing along those lines will yield useful data for further understanding of proto-Dravidian problems.

Ancient contacts of the early Dravidians with the Sumerians and other peoples of the Middle East are mentioned extensively in many classical texts. The ancient capital of Sumer was called 'Ūr', which bears identity with the Tamil word 'ūr' meaning 'town'; further, archaelogists have discovered at this spot buildings in which South Indian teak was used as early as 4000 B.C Schoff, referring to comparatively later times, mentions that south India traded in muslin and scents with distant countries like Egypt and Africa through Arabia and the Port of Aden, where Arabian traders acted as intermediaries.

But the classical age of the Tamils as studied here was one during which a fairly advanced material civilization had taken root among the Tamils and they specialised in foreign trade especially with the countries of the 'Middle East', particularly Egypt and Mesopotamia and with the Mediterranean countries of Italy and Greece. The Roman Contacts with Tamilaham were extensive in the commercial field but limited in the cultural field, at least so far as we know. The Tamil literature of the period is full of references to the Roman contacts with South India and the plethora of Roman coins of this period dug up in various places in South India bears evidence to this condition. Mr. R. Sewell, who has made a careful study of these coin-finds in South India, has no difficulty in establishing that the commercial contacts between Rome and South India commenced during the reign of Emperor Augustus (c. 60 A.D.) and continued right down to the death of Caracalla in 217 A.D. We have also evidence of the two Indian (Pāṇḍyan) embassies sent to Augustus Caesar, one of which he is said to have received, according to Roman records, at Terragoda (in Spain) and the other on the island of Cyprus. Apart from the mutual influencing caused by such trade and political contacts, the predominently commercial and secular nature of the civilization which developed in the two countries tended to

grow certain social institutions of a similar nature in those areas. But it would be risky to draw more than a passing and general conculsion from this similarity.

In this context it may not be inappropriate to give in brief outline the picture of South Indian society afforded to us by the contemporary Tamil Literature. The Tolkāppiam mentions Murugan, Māyōn, Indra, and Varúna as the gods presiding over the four forms of territorial regions of Tamilaham. Indra is referred to as 'Vēndan' (the king of the Dēvas, obviously) in that text. It is significant that Varuṇa, also a Vēdic god, finds mention in Tamil literature; and that Māyōn (whose attributes are mostly equal to those of Vishṇu) and Murugan (whose equation with Subrahmanya or Karthikēya is usually accepted) are rarely, if ever, mentioned by their Sanskrit names. They worshipped the crescent moon whose association with Śiva endowed it with unusual importance as an object of worship. Respect for omens and belief in superstitions were quite common. Bad dreams, the falling of comets, indication in the direction of bird flights are mentioned as evil forebodings in Śaṅgam works like Puṛananūru. Animal and even human sacrifices to propitiate the gods are often referred to in these poems and numerous festivals in honour of Indra, Kannan etc. find mention in Śaṅgam works.

The fine arts generally and music and dancing (including primitive Drama) particularly occupy a large place in Śaṅgam poetry, though we do not get enough technical details to reconstruct or understand fully those arts as they were practised in those distant days. Apart from accredited poets, who attached themselves permanently to particular patrons and the establishment of a Śaṅgam or a Board of literary censors at Madurai, there was a large body of wandering minstrels, whose life was far from settled or happy and who eked out a living which rested all the time on the moods of patrons. They were called the Pāṇar and they were a noṃadic group of people.

The Tamil polity of those days was monarchical; but society had not departed from its tribal mooring and it was a society governed by kings and chieftains who warred quite often among themselves. But society itself was a fairly peaceful society well versed in the art of manufacture and indulging in extensive trade with enough leisure and inclination to practise fine arts like poetry and music. The religious attachment of those people were not marred by bigotry but qualified by an uninihibited tolerance. They were lovers of comfort and the mass of the people were anything but pessimist. Lack of profound metaphysical texts like the Upanishads in their literary repertoire is made up to some extent by the existence of odes and lyrics, which are exceedingly charming in their naturalness of description and context. The civilization of the Tamils of the Śaṅgam age had reached a stage which prevented its being completely dominated or effaced by any foreign culture, including that of the Āryans. The utmost that could be achieved, and in fact was achieved, was a fusion between the two cultures, native and foreign.

CHAPTER I

The Êra of the Śaṅgam

In spite of what has been said in the introduction the chronology of the Śaṅgam age has not yet been put beyond doubt and it calls for a close enquiry, since the historical value of the Śaṅgam works on which we have to base our study in this book completely depends on the decision made with regard to the age of these works.

I. THE AGE OF TOLKĀPPIAM

The Tolkāppiam, according to tradition, is the oldest among extant Tamil works. Some stray sūtras assigned to authors of doubtful historicity like Kākkaippādiniyār, Agattiyar etc., have survived. But while most Tamil scholars believe that these persons were substantial and real historical personages, serious students of history hold these to be merely imaginary or mythical. The evidence at our disposal at present to prove the historicity of Agattiyar around whom very interesting legends have grown is so feeble that it would not be safe for us to try to fix Tolkāppiar's date with reference to Agattiyar or similar legendary figures.

Another angle from which Tolkāppiar's age has been attempted to be derived is the date of Pānini. The link between Tolkāppiar and Pānini arises out of a negative argument, viz., that in the *Pāyiram* to Tolkāppiam allegedly composed by Panambāranār (possibly a class-mate and probably contemporary of Tolkāppiar) there is a reference to Aindiram (a Sanskrit grammar supposed to have been written by Indra but not extant now) as the work well known to and mastered by Tolkāppiar and there is no reference to Pānini, the most famous and ancient of Sanskrit grammarians. This situation is supposed by many scholars to indicate the fact that Tolkappiar must have preceded Pānini. This argument is very fragile. In fact

trying to fix the date of Tolkappiam with reference to the date of Pānini is risky and not quite scientific as the date of neither is known for certain. While A B. Keith inclines towards 4th century B.C. for Pānini, native scholars would prefer to assign him to 6th century B.C. But in all probability he was anterior to Kautilya.[1] The mention of Aindiram in the *Pāyiram* does not mean that Tolkāppiar followed Aindiram in his work; for basically, Tamil grammar is in regard to orthography, syntax, figures of speech and prosody different from those of the Indo-Aryan group of languages (particularly Sanskrit), and so there can be no question of Tolkappiar taking as model either Pānini or Indra. The mention of his knowledge of Aindiram had presumably the limited purpose of indicating the extensive and versatile knowledge of that author; again, the non-mention of Pānini does not necessarily pre-date Tolkappiar with reference to Pānini.

Recently some attempts have been made to assign a post-Sangam date to Tolkappiar. Prominent among them is S. Vaiyapuri Pillai But there seems to be little justification for such a view. The facts that the diction of the Tolkappiam is about the most archaic known to students of Tamil, that many grammatical usages permitted by Tolkappiar are not found in any of the available pieces of Sangam literature, and that many grammatical prohibitions listed by Tolkappiar are overlooked in that literature should positively and negatively prove the high antiquity of that text.

The occurrence of the word 'Ōrai' (Time)[2] in the Tolkappiam is brought forward by him as an argument against an early Sangam date for the author of that grammatical work; it is submitted by him that the first occurrence of that word in Sanskrit literature was only during the Imperial Gupta period. The argument is rather juvenile; for those who know that there was extensive trade contact between the Egyptians in Alexandria and the Tamils even before Christ can easily understand that this word 'Hora'

(very important to sailors) would have easily found its way into Tamil vocabulary.

The difference in the mention of the four boundaries of the Tamil country in different texts is occasionally mentioned as an indication of the different prevailing boundaries. The mention of 'Kumari' as the Southern boundary in Tolkappiam (*Pāviram*) is the most usual reference to the southern boundary of Tamilaham in other texts also. River Pahruli mentioned by Iḷango and Adiyarkunallar in Silappadikāram perhaps ceased to exist as the southern boundary on the occasion of a diminutive deluge in the south. So, it is argued, Tolkappiam, (or, rather its *pāyiram*) mentioning Kumari must belong to a 'post-diluvian' epoch. It is not, however, necessary to confuse this limited and comparatively recent deluge with the prehistoric submergence of vast land areas between Madagascar and Indonesia, which must have occurred during some early geological period. In the same way, the non-mention of any Tamil kingdom in Pānini's grammar, also though negative, would only indicate poor communication between North India and the Tamil country in those days.

Though all attempts at categorical fixation of dates in regard to ancient Indian history would be hazardous, it may be said that Tolkappiar flourished sometime between Pānini and the first century B.C. Tentatively, therefore, till that date can be rejected by superior arguments, it may be held that Tolkappiar flourished sometime in the 4th or 3rd century B.C. Even the categorisation of the Sangams into the I,II, and III need not be doubted ; for while the Iraiyanār Ahapporul mentions such a tradition, the non-mention of that tradition in the Sangam literature itself is no definite proof of the falsity of the tradition If the age of Tolkappiar be the second Sangam era, the age of Imperial Rome would be coeval with the third Sangam.

It is also suggested that the statement in Tolkappiam to the effect that ritualistic marriage was introduced by the

'*aiyar*', after the '*kaḷavu*' system of marriages (the Gandharva system) resulted in degenerate practises" indicates a transitional period in the history of the institution of matrimony in the Tamil country. It is argued that the text, which speaks of the transition, must have followed at least soon after that age, and therefore Tolkappiam must have been composed many centuries before Christ. The argument is not quite logical; for Tolkappiar refers to the 'transition' not exactly as if it occurred recently for him, but just as a stage in the evolution of the institution of matrimony in the Tamil country. Apart from this, historically speaking, there is little evidence to support that the Gandharva system of marriage or '*kaḷavu*' was in vogue extensively at any time in Tamilaham. So Tolkappiar must have been alluding to a poetic convention when he spoke of the '*kaḷavu*'; and when he introduced the theme 'aiyar yātta karanam' (the rituals introduced by the aiyar) he was only justifying the contemporary state of affairs.

II. THE THEORY OF THE THREE ŚAṄGAMS

In regard to the three Sangams it is clear that they were successive and not contemporary. Of course, the commentary on the Iraiyanar Ahapporul mentions them as successive and speaks of deluges occurring during the intervals between them. If the impossible events mentioned in the Ahapporul commentary are chopped off, we get an outline and historically probable picture of what might have happened in regard to the Sangams. In the so called Sangam classics, which are now extant, the Sangam itself is not mentioned as such; but by some equivalent like 'Kūttu' or 'Kūdal' which means 'an association'.

The date of the third Śaṅgam emerges with a greater probability than that of the other Śaṅgams; and the date is surely the first two centuries of the Christian era and probably the century immediately preceding the Christian era. This dating is sustained by evidence available in the writings of the classical writers of the West (of Greece and

Rome). The frequent references to shipping and overseas trade in merchandise including pepper and sandal wood and pearls and to Yavanas[3], who came in their ships and colonized some parts of the Tamil country (termed in their language 'Damirike'), which we find in the writings of the classical writers find unmistakable corroboration in the Śaṅgam literature.

In recent times, an argument has been drawn from the Brahmi inscriptions of Aśōka found in south India as far down as Mysore as also some other little cave inscriptions (found in the Tamil country) in which the script is not Tamil, but the language is Tamil. It is maintained by scholars like Dr. N. P. Chakravarti[4] and Dr. T. V. Mahalingam[5] that Tamil had no script independent of Brahmi in those days. But the Tolkappiam, which is without doubt anterior to the Śaṅgam literature, mentions formation of letters of the Tamil alphabet, so that one can have no objection to accept the theory of an early and independent script for Tamil. It is gratifying to note that even scholars like Mr. T. N. Ramachandran[6] have no wheeled round to the view that "a separate script for Tamil existed from ancient times, (but) on certain special occasions the language was written in Brahmi". Besides, the script of these inscriptions does not form by itself an irrefutable argument for post-dating the Śaṅgam period, for one does not know how and under what circumstances the script was used in those inscriptions. It is likely that the Brahmi script was used on occasions when the inscription was intended to be understood by non-Tamils from the north. As Dr. K. K. Pillay in a well reasoned paper on the subject says, "It is an indubitable fact that the South Indian Brahmi epigraphs are all associated with the Buddhists...Little wonder therefore that the inscriptions are dominated by the Prakrit element".[7] The Buddhists seem to have taken a pleasue in recording offerings etc., in their own religious language, which was Prakrit.

III. THE WORKS OF THE THIRD ŚAṄGAM

The extant works of the third Śaṅgam are quite numerous and run to many thousands of lines of poetry. Anthologies like Ahananūṟu, Puṟananūṟu, Pathuppaṭṭu, the eighteen minor works like Paḷamoḷi found among the Padineṇkīḷkaṇakku, Patiṟṟuppattu (a work dealing exclusively with Chēra affairs) and the twin epics Silappadikāram and Maṇimēkhalai not only belong to this period but also shed light on the history of this period. Recent historical criticism pushes the poems in the Padineṇkīḷkkanakku collection to a period later than III century A D. Some of the works are taken to even the V or VI century A D. It may not be necessary at this stage and in a work of this compass to list all the objections raised by the scholars. Though most of the arguments advanced by them are based on stylistics there are some historical points also raised by them. The arguments based on stylistics cannot be very conclusive, because stylistic variations are based not only over a period of time but over different parts of the country and are usually varied to suit variations in the theme. The language and diction adopted in the case of an epic like Silappadikāram would naturally differ from those of a simple lyric dealing with a mere rural topic. But historical arguments need close attention. Even there enthusiasm seems to have got the better of reason. For example, the only serious historical argument advanced against an early date for Nālaḍiyar is that there is a reference in two of the poems in that anthology to one Perumuttarāyar. The objection is that inscriptional reference to the Muttarayar occurs only after the 7th century A D. That this argument cannot hold water will be evident to any impartial scholar; for there is nothing to prevent a dynasty of petty rulers from getting literary mention first and epigraphic references later. This argument also unnecessarily presupposes that epigrapic references are the deciding factors in historical conclusions. That it is not necessarily so should be clear to any one. This is only by way of an example, though it is possible to refute

every one of the arguments advanced by the protagonists of a late date for most of the Sangam works. Further any insinuation that an early date for the Sangam works is suggested only by patriotic considerations can be countered on its own merits by suggesting that strained attempts at late dating may also be forced by like considerations working in the opposite direction.

Prof. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri is very clear when he says; "My view is that this literature belongs to the early centuries of the Christian era and it rests not so much on the Gajabāhu synchronism which is itself quite a sound one as on general considerations arising out of a comparison of the political and economic conditions of Southern India as reflected in this body of literature with what we learn on the same subject from European classical sources like the Periplus and Ptolemy and from early Buddhist literature".[8]

In regard to the date of Silappadikāram, there are three views taken: one is to believe that Iḷanko Adigal was in fact a brother of Senguttuvan, that the Senguttuvan-Gajabāhu synchronism is valid and that the orthodox view is not wrong. The second view is held by scholars like K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, who think that while Iḷango Adigal was perhaps not a contemporary of Senguttuvan, (but in fact a late author) the Senguttuvan-Gajabāhu synchronism mentioned in the Silappadikāram is genuinely historical. The third view must be only the notorious one that Silappadikaram is a huge hoax. Sri S. Vaiyapuri Pillai starts with three assumptions, none of which is necessary or warranted: i.e. (1) that epigraphic references should always precede literary references; (2) that if a legend or story or a metaphysical theory or a piece of tradition finds mention in a Sanskrit text, a similar reference in Tamil can come only after the Sanskrit reference; (3) that the diction and prosody forms employed in the Silappadikāram are late forms. As regards the first two assumption, it is clear that they are puerile; as for the third it may be pointed out that there is no prosody form in Silappadikāram, which does not derive from the august authority

of Tolkāppiam. K. N. Sivaraja Pillai's view that the Purananuru is anterior to Tolkāppiam is supported by his obsession that Tolkāppiar foisted certain 'aryan practices and beliefs' on the Tamils i.e., practices and beliefs unknown (according to him) to the Tamils of the days of Purananuru. But this need not tarry us. In fact there is no part in the extant Tamil literature which does not betray considerable acquaintance with Sanskritic lore of all kinds.

The astronomical data available in the Silappadikāram have been worked and different results obtained by different scholars. It almost looks as if each scholar derives the date he wants to derive; e.g. L. D. Swamikkannu Pillai thought that 756 A.D. as the date, adding 'being just one among many possible ones'. Prof. V.R.R. Dikshitar had independent calculations carried out and thought that 164 A.D. was possible. If Prof. Dikshitar's dating cannot be completely ruled out, it may be supposed to supplement the orthodox dating of Silappadikāram. As regards Manimēkalai, the orthodox view that the two epics are contemporaneous does not seem to have been seriously upset by the suggestion that Manimēkalai was indebted to Dinnāga's Nyayapraveśika. This suggestion has been disputed and rejected by Dr. S. K. Ayyangar himself. In any case even if a slight variation in dating is unavoidable there is no doubt that all these works cited above depict the social life of the Tamils of the Śangam Age.

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1. Kautalya's date is not certain; in fact the major and fundamental problem that bedevils all ancient Indian historical research is that only very few dates are known with any precision, though relative dating is in some cases possible.
2. Hora. Greek; hence 'hour' English.
3. The term *Yavana* found in the Tamil literature of the Sangam age has been made to refer to the Romans and Greeks by all scholars who have studied them. It has not been questioned as to why these westerners were so called. The term in fact seems to be a variant of Emanites-Evanites-Yavanites-Yavanar, meaning the Arabs. Since in the beginning the Indo-Roman trade was carried on through the Arab intermediary this name seems to have signified to the Tamils the Romans and Greeks as well.
4. Dr. N. P. Chakravarti: *Presidential address:* 'All India-Historical Congress', 1954.
5. Dr. T. V. Mahalingam: *Presidential address:* 'Oriental Conference Proceedings' (Dravidian Section) 1953.
6. The Hindu: *Weekly Supplement*, dated, May 20, 1962.
7. Tamil culture: Vol. II, p. 175 ff.
8. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri: *Studies*, pp. 25-26.

CHAPTER II

The Historical Importance of the Śaṅgam Poems

In the range covered by this study the Tamil grammar Tolkāppiyam and numerous poems including the short odes and the long lyrics besides the two great epics-Śilappadikāram and Maṇimēkhalai-furnish historical matter in a substantial measure.

The short odes are collected in anthologies called the "Aham Four Hundred" (*Ahanānūṟu*), the "Puṟam Four Hundred" (*Puṟanānūṟu*), the anthology of the shorter poems called *Kuṟuntogai*, the "Naṟṟinai Four Hundred", "Kalittogai One Hundred and Fifty", "Paripāḍal Seventy" (of which only 22 are available), the "Five Hundred Short Odes" (*Aiṅguṟunūṟu*), and the "Ten-Tens" (*Patiṟṟupattu*) collectively called *Eṭṭuttogai* and in the ten long lyrics or *Pattupāṭṭu* consisting of *Tirumurugāṟṟuppaḍai*, *Siṟupāṇāṟṟuppaḍai*, *Porunarāṟṟuppaḍai*, *Perumbāṇaṟṟuppaḍai*, *Neḍunalvāḍai*, *Kuṟinchippāṭṭu*, *Maduraikkāñji*, *Paṭṭinappālai*, *Mullaippāṭṭu* and *Malaipaḍukaḍām*. Of these *Tirumurugāṟṟuppaḍai* is a devotional poem on Lord Muruga, *Sirupāṇāṟṟuppaḍai* deals with the generous nature of Nalliyakkoḍan, who ruled over a part of the Chōḷa Kingdom; *Perumbāṇāṟṟuppaḍai* relates to Toṇḍaimān Iḷantiraiyan and his capital Kāñchipuram; *Porunarāṟṟuppaḍai* deals with Karikāla, the great Chōḷa king who is praised in *Paṭṭinappālai* also (though under a different name, the name of Tirumāvaḷavan). *Neḍunalvāḍai* praising Talaiyālàngānattu Neḍuñjeḷiyan; *Kuṟiñjipāṭṭu* with its graphic description of the hill country and hill life; *Maduraikkāñji* also on Talayālaṅgānattu Neḍuñjeḷiyan; and *Malaipaḍukaḍām* on the chieftaiṅ Nannan complete the list.

The eighteen minor works (*Padineṇkīḻkaṇaku*) which have been by literary tradition usually associated with the Śaṅgam works but have of late been assigned to later dates are not, as historical source material, of the same

value as the anthologies above mentioned. There are other and possibly earlier works like *Guṇanārpadu*, *Mūvaḍi-munnūṟu*, *Muttoḷḷāyiram*, and *Tagaḍūryātirai* of which only a few stanzas mentioned in medieval commentaries are available.

What is the exact historical value of these works? For the last half-a-century this question has been subjected to much heated discussions. We may begin with the authoritative dictum of one, who has occupied the chair of Indian History & Archaeology in the University of Madras for over a decade and a half, Prof. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri :-

> " But this we do know that in some manner that seems to us such a marvel the ancients commanded the means of handing from generation to generation, orally or otherwise, a considerable literature with exceptional accuracy. The history of the Vedic samhitas with their commentary and of the early Buddhist Pali literature is sufficient proof of this. " [1]

To people unaccustomed to the Indian way of life this may seem incredible but to those who know Indian methods this will seem but obvious. Here lies the fundamental reason for using these sources as historical material. Though much time must have flown between the singing of these songs and their commitment into records, a fact that may be taken to vitiate their usefulness for history, we have to take many of these poems as contemporary records because of the Indian mind possessed remarkable capacity for retainment through the passage of almost any length of time.

I. THE POEMS: THE LONG ONES AND THE SHORT ONES

The Śaṇgam poems are of two varieties, though scholars have divided them into various categories following their subject matter. The two varieties are (1) the short ode and (2) the long poem. This is the classifica-

1. Sastri; *Chola History and Administration*, 9

tion adopted by the redactors and original commentators. After much discussion resulting in the classification of these poems into different categories scholars have again veered round to this original classification as the best in the circumstances and also the most natural one. From the historian's standpoint also the short odes are of greater value than the long lyrics, though generally the historical worth of these sources are irrespective of their length. We shall return to this at a later stage.

Here it may be generally said that as in the case of all poets the Śaṇgam poets also were prone to exaggerate, and that though hyperbole is a usual weakness with poets in general and oriental poets in particular, the sort of hyperbole one comes across in the Śaṇgam poems is neither misleading nor fantastic but just enough to distinguish it from dry prose. Among the Śaṇgam poems, the lesser is the occasion for exaggeration when the poem is short. But the longer ones like the lyrics have greater scope for the imagination. The two long poems in this collection—Pattinappālai and Maduraik-kāñji - dealing with the love situation of separation (technically *pālai*) and the ascetic situation of transcience (technically *kañchi*) incidentally glorify their heroes, Karikāla and Neduñjeliyan, and abound in exaggerated and involved descriptions. The epics of this period also belong to the same category.

The short odes (with their colophons,) on the other hand furnish a fundamental substratum of history which may be relied upon as sure foundation for raising the structure of history. They help us with the names of kings, their battles, their foes and their victories and defeats - bare minimum perhaps but a minimum that would certainly help our ancient history to great advantage. Such verity helps us particularly to cross over the hurdle of overstatement and confusion. Thus in Puram 45 the poet Kōvurkiḻār tries to pacify two Chola brothers and in the ode following the same poet saves the sons of Malayamān from being trampled upon

by the elephant under orders of the Chōla king Kiḷḷi-vaḷavan. Even our great kings like Karikāla are just mentioned by names and a few of their achievements. Karikāla is referred to in four odes in the Puram and Agam collections[1] wherein the battles of Venni and Vāgaiparant-alai are mentioned along with the number of chieftains and kings defeated by him on these occasions. The historical accuracy of the authors of these odes can be seen by a comparison of the two odes 125 and 246 in which Karikāla is said to have defeated nine and eleven chieftains respectively.

This does not mean that the long poems have little historical value. If we are only careful to make allowances for the obviously imaginary details found in them they may be said to furnish the meat for the raw bones of facts mentioned in the short poems. The following lines from Pattinappālai give us a graphic description of the trade of the times, which no historian can ignore:

> " the good and worthy gods protect
> the city's limits. Here are brought
> swift prancing steeds by sea in ships
> and bales of pepper black, by carts.
> Himalayas sends gems and gold,
> while Kuda hills, sweet sandal-wood
> and *akhil*; pearls from the south sea come
> and coral from the eastern sea
> the Ganges and the Kāviri bring
> their yield; Ceylon provides food
> and Burma, manufactures rare.
> With other rare and rich imports
> this wealth lies close and thickly piled,
> confused along the spacious Streets."[2]

It must be obvious how exaggeration and reality go together in the Śangam poems, of which the above is a type

1. Puram 66; Agam, 55, 125 and 246.
2. Pattinappālai, 211 ff

and how it is easy to distinguish one from the other, thus making the poems yield historical material. For a description of society as in Śaṅgam times perhaps it is hard to beat the long poems of the period. The descriptions in them are often very full and realistic. Even poems which have no direct connection on social life or political events very often yield us information. The Kuriñjippāttu, for example, has very little to do with society as we understand by the term and it is a hill-song. Yet even here one gets a vivid account of the life that was lived by the hunters and the hill-folk. The picture of the youth in the hilly region of South India is thus brought before us in the following few lines taken from the poem :

> "a youth appeared, whose well-oiled curly hair
> that shone like gem was smeared with unguents sweet;
> he with his fingers stirred his plaited hair
> to make it dry. His locks were scented well
> with hard, dark *akhil* smoke ; his hair was filled
> with odours that delight the striped bees,
> whose hum is like the music of the lute.' [3]

In Maduraikkāñji we have more descriptions of the king and the court, his battles and victories. A striking picture of the judges of the court is thus given :

> " these are just judges who expound the law
> and from the suitors' minds remove all fear,
> distress and too much greed. They do their work
> avoiding passion and all levity.
> with fair impartial minds they ponder things
> as though they weighed them in a pair of scales." [4]

Religion gets a fair share of mention in all these poems particularly in Tirumurugārruppadai, the song dealing with Muruga, the favourite deity of the Tamils. Paripādal is another of the collection of poems which deals with Tirumāl and Murugan. Allusion is made to various

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3. Kuriñjippāttu, 86 ff
4. Maduraikkāñji, 69 ff

mythological stories which have their own value in any proper estimate of the religious growth of the people. In lines 90-94 of Tirumurugārruppadai the origin of Muruga, particularly in his six forms, is explained; in lines 327 and the following the destruction of Tripura by Lord Śiva is alluded to; in lines 230-31 Indra's thousand eyes are mentioned. The whole poem gives us a picturesque account of the religious rites and ceremonies of the day. Reference is made in this work to the *kanthu,* originally a stump planted for worship. This would point to the way in which the worship of the symbol in the place of the deity must have arisen. This must mark in another way the beginning of idol worship in the Tamil country.

The poem Nedunalvādai is a war-song and in it we have beautiful descriptions of the royal camp, the king's concern for soldiers etc.:

> " the king inspects outside the tent the wounds
> bright swords inflicted on heroic men
> * * * *
> a captain armed with the lance, whose shaft is strong
> whose head is bound with blossoms of the neem,
> goes with the king and points out one by one
> the wounded men * * *[1]

2. The Epics

The two epics of the Śaṅgam age-Śilappadikāram and manimēkhalai - also called the twin-epics, because they tell the story of, so to say, a single family, the rich merchant prince of Puhār, Kōvalan, his wife Kannagi, the chaste one, Mādhavi with whom he lived in wedlock and Manimēkhalai, the child of this wedlock. Their story runs into long poetical works which have become classics of not only Tamil literature but of the whole of the Indian literature as well. Their historical value also is equally considerable, seeing that between them

1. Nedunalvādai, 195 ff.

all the important royal cities of the times get described and with such details that they enlighten the historian to a vast extent. Madura, Puhār, Vañji and Kāñchi are spotlighted and their social, religious and economic conditions stand out in relief through these poetical works, generally called epics. The kings of the times, their wars and conquests and methods of administration are also described by the epic authors in the course of their narration and thus these works furnish much information to construct political history as well. It is with their evidence, for example, that the theory of the various marches of the early Tamil kings as far as the Himalayan region is prominently held. It is not too much to say that the history of Tamilakam in the age of the Sangam will be poorer without these sources and that a tolerable history of the age can be written by merely making use of these two epics.

Dr. S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar in his book *Manimēkhalai in its Historical setting* takes much pains to establish the historical value of these works and says with great caution :

> " Nevertheless the poem (Manimekhalai) could contain and does contain much that may be historical, provided the material is used on principles of sound criticism."[1]

Much water has flowed under the bridge since this was written in 1927 and to-day both Śilappadikāram and Manimēkhalai claim the earnest attention of the historian. They are not epics like those of Homer or Vālmiki interspersed with stories from mythology, but simple realistic narration of the ups and downs of fortune in the family of a merchant residing at Puhār, who wanders into evil ways ensnared by the wiles of a courtesan. Reference is sometimes made to the plucking

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1. S. K. Aiyangar ; Manimēkhalai, 12 ff.

away of the breast Kannagi with her own hand, the several journies of Manimēkhalai and a few other unreal things of the same kind to show that the whole narration is unreliable. But a few swallows cannot make a summer, nor a little cold, a winter. On the other hand, it would appear that such unreal statements were of the literary genre of the early days and their appearance alone cannot make the whole account unreliable, especially when we know that many statements of historical value found in the epics get corroborated in the short odes of the Śangam times. So long as we can see, the unreal in the two epics what is real and historical can be easily estimated and then they would spread before our mind's eye the picture of early Tamil life.

The corroborative value of *Śañgam* works needs a special word, since it is this which renders the two epics useful to history. In the first place the striking similarity of description and even the narration of events in either category is too obvious to be missed by any student of early Tamil literature. The very background in which Kōvalan's life and it events are placed is one that is portayed in other sangam works as will. The character of Mādhavi, the courtesan, is typical in these early Tamil poems and to the student of Tamil she moves in the pages of these epics most naturally and easily. The description of the festival of Indra in Śilappadikāram has its echo in Pattinappālai, where the festival of Lord Muruga is described. War as described in canto xxvi of Śilappadikāram is to be read in many Sangam poems particularly in Pattinappālai and Maduraikkāñji describing the events of the reigns of Karikāla and Neḍuñjeḷiyan respectively. These references, though not identical, are similar enough to suggest parity between them. Cross references between the historical materials in the epics and the anthologies make it clear that a continuous and fairly true tradition of recording events had certainly permeated early Tamil literature, both epic and lyric.

Lastly we come to the historical worth of the authors themselves to whom these works are ascribed. Iḷaṅgo aḍigaḷ, the author of Śilappadikāram, is expressly mentioned as the brother of the reigning Chēra king Śeṅguṭṭuvan[1] both in the *padigam* and in the last canto of the epic, while Sāttan is mentioned as the friend and companion of llango, to whom he is said to have narrated the events connected with Kōvalan and Kaṇṇagi. The references are so clear and forthright that there can be no doubt about their contemporāneity. There can be also little doubt about their personal relations and the fact of Iḷango being the brother of Śeṅguṭṭuvan. The epic account in the last canto tells us the reason why Iḷaṅgo gave up the life of pleasure and ease and material comfort and became an ascetic. It mentions that it was the forecast of an astrologer that Iḷaṅgo would supersede Śeṅguṭṭuvan on the Chēra throne that made the former give up all connections with the royal family. Swamikannu Pillai contends that "the idea of writing an epic under the pen name of Iḷaṅgo was cleverly conceived"[2] Prof. Vaiyapuri Pillai holds that the epic author was writing an imaginary story that is placed in surroundings of which he was not a personal witness. These cannot hold any water in face of the evidences not only from the *padigam* but also from the body of the work. Besides, the idea of the poet trying to foist on us his contemportaneity with the events he is narrating and even more his relationship with the Chera king is too queer to be taken seriously. Mr. Vaiyapuri Pillai gives a list of the impossible and unnatural in Śilappadikāram to convey to us the imaginary character of the epic. No one claims for the epic the character of history as is to be found in a professedly historical work. It is the narration of a true event or events made venerable by many additions truly in the character of Indian purānas and other works of a sacred or religious style. It is wrong to say that anything his-

1. Śil., Padigam, lines 1-2 ; 10-11 : XXX, 85-87 : XXV, 65-68
2. Indian Ephemeris Vol. 1.

torical cannot be found in such a work. Any writer, even the most romantic, cannot get out of the social milieu in which he is placed and that milieu ought to supply us information of a truly historical character. The case with regard to Silappadikāram and Manimakhalai is all the more so because the events in both the works are placed in the four royal capitals of the times and the authors are men closely connected with a royal peronage like Śeṅguttuvan. Before such considerations the arguments *contra* appear trivial. It used to be said that what is stated in the *padigam* of the epic deserves little credit, since there is a possibility of it having been added to later by one different from the epic author. While the difference in time-space need not vitiate the tradition contained in the *padigam*, the last canto, as shown already, confirms in extenso what the *padigam* states in brief.

4. The Poets

Along with the historical soundness of the two epic authors we shall try to evalute the worth of the other poets of the Śangam age as well for historical purposes.

In the first place these poets had lived a full life in every sense. They had wandered far and wide, seen not only men and things but also all the varied sides of life, its ups and downs both in their own lives and in those of others. They had thus come to imbibe a wideness of interest and experience not commonly met with. Royalty, that is now to be approached only by aristocracy and wisdom, were easily within the reach of these men and often we find kings and nobles lending their ears to these wandering poets, who play the role of political philosophers and advisers.[1] The instance of Kōvūrkiḻār advising the Cōḻa princes, Nalaṅkiḻḻi and Neḍuṅkiḻḻi, to give up fighting is but an example, and instances of this kind are many.[2] The Cōḻa ruler Kiḻḻivalavan is sung in eighteen

1. Arokiaswami, *Pol. Philosophers of Anc. S. India*, J. I. H. XXVIII, iii
2. See, for e.g., *Pope's translations*, I. A. XXIX, pp. 250 ff.

verses by ten different poets all of whom emphasise his greatness and importance and give him useful advice. One from a little known poet, Veḷḷaikkuḍi Nāganār, deserves to be quoted :

> " Let me speak out to this rich country's king.
> Be easy of access at fitting time as though the
> Lord of Justice sat to hear and right decree.
> Such kings have rain in their dominions at their
> will. The clouds thick gather round the sun and
> rest in the vault of heaven. So let thy canopy of
> state challenge the sky and spread around not
> gloom but peaceful shade. Let all thy victories
> be the toiling ploughman's gain. Kings get the
> blame whether rains fail or copious flow and
> lack the praise : such is the usage of the world
> If thou hast marked and known this well reject the
> wily counsel of malicious men. Lighten the load
> of those who till the soil. The dwellers in the
> land protect. If thou do this thy stubborn foes
> shall slowly bend beneath thy feet."[1]

In one of the poems attributed to Ālattūrkiḻār he is represented as advising the ruler to give up his siege of Karūr because of the shame that would attach to his conquest of a weak ruler.[2]

Their poems are studded with references to political events and kings. So soaked are they in the politial atomosphere of the period that a poet dealing with a love-lorn warrior brings in a description of the warring condition of the times, which have rendered the hero to go far from his lady love :

> "Our king has concluded his war. On the hill
> streams the blue lily blooms bright as maiden's eyes.
> ....
> Our soldiers after marching along the road straight
> like a long street have stopped at different spots

1. Puram 35 (Pope's translation)
2. *Ibid* 36

> The hoofs of the horses tread upon the thick petals
> of the white *kāndal* (*glorisa superba*) which look
> like broken bangles made of conch. Have the crows
> shown omens prognosticating the near approach of my
> strong shoulders to my loving wife ?"[1]

Nay, more. A common event like the virali (dancing woman) attempting to ensnare men into illegitimate love is compared by a poet to the victory of the Tamils against the Āryans at Mullūr.[2] In Agam. 336 is another reference to this Ārya-Tamil war and the battle of Vallam is mentioned. In this connection "The close array of Kurumba bowmen fighting under the Chōḻas" is compared to the vengence a harlot vows against the "pure wives" of her lovers.

It is easy to find historical reference in such poems. What is more important is the fact that such references as are casually made as in the instances pointed out above ought to demand our credence even more than statements made with a set historical purpose. Another circumstance that adds weight to these allusions is that they, who have made them, were shrewd observers, who had access to see with their own eyes or hear from reliable sources what they refer to.

The whole collection of Agam poems dealing with the unaccountable and the indescribable in human love, sex appeal and sexual life are such as to take one's breath away and one is left wondering like Hazlitt meeting Coleridge, "with what eyes these poets see." The varieties of men and things they mention bespeak an uncanny power of observation in these denizens of the poetic world To take but one example, the kinds of flowers mentioned in these Śangam poems leave us wondering for the sheer number mentioned, let alone identifying them.[3] Then references are made to the activities of

1. Naṟṟinai, 161 (P. T. Srinivasa Aiyangar's Trans.)
2. Puram, 126.
3. Kuriñjippāṭṭu mentions not less than 99 kinds of flowers in a list in lines 76 ff.

the botanical world, that the flower *neruñji* always looks up to the sun,[1] the *nochi* falls from the tree at midnight[2] the mullai flowers in the evening[3] and so on. It is to be noted that the very name *Kuṟiñji* given to the hill region takes it from the flower going by that name and now equated by botanists with the Strobilanthes that grows at an altitude of 6,000 feet and flowers only once in nine years. In the same way zoologists marvel at the frequent references in these poems to the belief that the panther does not eat the victim that falls to its left.[4]

These poets saw not only with their bodily eyes but also with the mental eye and understood what are described by Tamil Commentators as *kātchipporul* and *karuthupporul.* The treatment of men and things in the Śangam poems is thoroughly realistic and their antiquity can be proved perhaps even from this one circumstance, since as time goes on this realism begins to wilt. Puram, Agam. Kurunthogai, and Naṟṟinai are thus a class apart and deserve our credence all the more. I may fittingly conclude this section with what a Western admirer of these poets wrote :

> " The life of the peasant and the scenes of the country side, the bustle of the towns and ruthlessness of war are here depicted as though from direct experience and with no formal unrealistic idealisation ".[5]

4. The Grammars and the Commentaries

The unique quality of the Tamil literary sources is that even works on grammar yield wonderful information about the history of the times. Tolkāppiyam, in particular, is prolific in information. The well-known five-fold classification of lands according to their nature and yield - the marutham, mullai, neydal, pālai and kuṟiñji referring

1. Agam, 336.
2. Kuṟun. 138.
3. Ibid.
4. Puṟam, 190.
5. Basham, *The wonder* p. 462.

respectively to the arable, pastoral, littoral, desert and hilly tracts - we owe to his grammar and it is this classification that accounts for all the realistic treatment we get in the Śangam poems and the picture of the society of the times comes to us clear and unalloyed. The different weights and measures mentioned in this grammar, for example, bespeak extensive trade and economic activity.

The commentators, it is sometimes said, make the poets. It is not less true with regard to the commentators of the Tamil works; and names like those of Iḻampūraṇar, Nacchinārkiniyar, Pērāśiriyar, Śēnāvaraiyar Kallādanār, Deivachilaiyar, Nakkīrar. Parimēlaḻagar, Arumpathavuraiāśiriyar and Adiyārkkunallār will ever remain unforgettable in the world of Tamil scholars and as long as Tamil is spoken. They by their erudition and industry have not only set these poems on a pedestal but have also given us much useful historical information. They belong to the XII and the XIII centuries when the Tamil Country was ruled by the Chōlas and was in the acme of her glory. This became also the age of the commentators. They record many traditions of the ancient days, to which we ought to give credence seeing the erudition displayed by them in their commentaries.

Many old works now beyond recovery are mentioned by these writers and Naccinārkkiniyar alone refers to 82 old classics in his comment on Tolkāppiyam. In the same way Adiyārkkunallār in his commentary on Śilappadikāram refers to many works on music now long since disappeared. One of them, Iśainunūkkam, mentioned as the work of Śikaṇḍiyar, is said to have been one among the twelve students of Agattiyar. It is from this commentary that we know of Sikaṇḍiyar.

He possessed a rare knowledge of the ancient arts of music and dancing. His treatment of these subjects is all that we possess to-day of these old-time arts for which south India is famous to this day. What we know from

him does help us in forming a picture of the cultural state of the days of Śilappadikāram to which his commentary is attached. The comment of Adiyārkkunallār refers to the great deluge of our early history when Then-pali was submerged upto the Pahruḻi in the north, thus investing plausibility to the theory of the destruction by flood of the two earlier centres of the Tamil Sangam.

Iḻampūranar mentions the connection between Rāvana and Agattiyar in his comment on Tolkāppiyam and that may serve to throw light on the chronology of the grammarian, the great king of Ceylon and even the epic hero Śri Rama. The comment of Nacchinārkiniyar on the *pāyiram* of Tolkāppiyam gives us some useful data on the north-south migrations in ancient India. Pērāśiriar identifies Sāthanār of Manimēkhalai, also called as Madurai Kūlavānigan Śāthanār, with Sîthalai Śāthanār of the Śaṅgam age, which fortifies our position in assigning the twin epics to the II century A. D. These are but a few examples to show the myriaḍ ways in which these commentators are helpful in building up our early history. It is not too much to say that but for them much history would have been lost to us.

5. The Colophons

The truth of this statement comes home to us particularly when we are dealing with the colophons appended to the Śangam poems like those in the Puram [1] The colophons are in their own way small commentaries bearing on fundamental data with regard to a poem, as to who sang it, on whom it was sung and on what occasion. Information on these points is absolutely necessary to make these poems yield historical information. The colophons furnishing them form important historical sources. Their value to us is thus very great. But the

1. A good portion of the Śaṅgam works have these colophons attached to them. Agam, Puram, and Patirruppattu (now translated into English as the *ten-tens*) contain the colophon. The colophons to the Pattupāṭṭu (ten idyls) were composed, perhaps during Naccinārkiniyar's period, for he is also mentioned therein.

author of the colophon and the poet whom he mentions as the author of a particular poem are not always contemporaries. Often, if not always, the reverse is the case.[2] Great controversies have raged in times past with regard to the credibility of the colophonist and a great deal of it was based on the space between the poet and the colophonist. Modern view has, however, veered round to a different view.

The historical worth of the colophon has however been ably set forth by Prof K. A. N. Sastri in the first of his *Studies in Cōḻa history and administration* and needs no elaboration here. Perunthēvanār of *Bhâratam* fame, as he is called because of his authorship of *Bhâratam* (*Bhâratam pādiya Perunthēvanār*) to whom the introductory verses of many of the poems of the Śaṅgam age are attributed is referred to in the larger Śinnamanūr plates of the VII century along with the battle of Talayālankānam to which reference is made in the same copper plates, which would show that Perunthēvanār belonged roughly to the period of Talayālankānam directly mentioned in the poems of the Śangam age. If this be accepted, then the colophons may not be far later in date than the poems to which they are affixed.[3] This great man seems to have been also responsible for the anthology of most of the Śangam works which would imply that it was not long after the poems were sung that they were also compiled. These circumstances invest the Śangam anthologies with a rare historical value. That they have been used as historical material from very early times is also clear from the references in the works of the above mentioned commentators. Nacchinārkiniyar, for example, discusses the use of the colophons as historical sources and explains the difference between the grammatical systems of Tolkāppiyam and those followed by certain colophons by referring to the fact

2. In one case alone the anthologist seems to be contemporaneous with the poems collected. It is in the case of *Kalittogai* that the poem of the anthologist, Nallanthuvanār, is found in the collection itself.

3. The old view that this copper plate reference is to the author of the Bhāratavenba of the reign of Nāndivarman Pallavamalla has been now given up. *Bhāratam* and *Bhāratavenba* are obviously two different works.

that some of the authors of the colophons have followed later systems. This explanation while it settles a difficulty with regard to the age of these colophons makes us at the same time understand that they were considered as furnishing historical material even in the days of this commentator.

Mr. P. T. Srinivāsa Aiyangar's arguments against their trustworthiness elaborated in his *History of the Tamils*,[4] cannot be sustained. He describes them at one place as "occasionally unreliable", at another as "an inextricable tangle of fact and fiction" and in yet a third place as "a few notes on the life of a few kings", so that it would be clear that the exact historical nature of these small commentaries of the Śangam poems is not clear to Mr. Aiyangar himself. The colophons may be sometimes vague and sometimes even confusing, while in a few cases we may be unable to understand their meaning; but in spite of all these short comings their historical worth remains four square.

There are three reasons generally advanced against too much reliance on the colophons. They may be briefly stated and answered:

(1) That the *tiṇai* and the *tuṟai* divisions are based on the Puṟapporuḷ Veṇbāmālai This argument is not very convincing and instead of dating the colophons post-Purapporul Veṇbāmālai may be taken to mean that the Veṇbāmālai merely sets forth an already prevalent tradition of *tiṇai* and *tuṟai* classification familiar to the colophonists also.

(2) The use of descriptive phrases in the colophons for names of kings and poets concerned with the poems can only mean that such colophons belong to an age comparatively later than the poems and not make us doubt the general veracity of the colophons.

(3) The discrepancy in certain points of information between the colophons and the poems should be borne in

4. History of the Tamils pp. 410 off.

mind while the historian uses such colophons. When he does this, they are bound to yeild historical data.

6. Conclusion

That there is matter of real historical value in the Śangam works particularly those of the third Sangam as it is called can now be never denied. The poets of the period could have had no intention of deceiving us and they were absolutely unaware that they would one day pass into history. The accounts of men who had neither the intention nor even the suspicion of becoming historical authorities must for that very reason claim our attention all the more.

Mr. Sadasiva Pandārathār in a learned address delivered at Madras at a conference called to commemorate the greatness of Puṟanāṉūṟu points out the numerous ways in which the historical evidence furnished by the poems of the above-mentioned collection tallies with that of inscriptional records.[1] While it is not necessary to repeat them here, it may be recalled that some of the names of the Pāṇḍyan kings and poets of the Śangam age are mentioned in Pāṇḍyan epigraphs. Kings like Kaḍuṅgōn and Ugrapperuvaḷudi, poets like Perunthēvanār and the institution of the very Śangam at Madura are mentioned in these records.[2] What is even more important is the evidence from the negative side. The Śangam poems do not mention certain doubtful events which we now consider as historical. An example may be drawn from the so-called Karikāla's embankment of the Cauvery now taken for a fact. The Malēpadu plates of Punyakumāra (VII century A. D.) are the first to make mention of this embankment Though the Ceylonese chronicle Rājāvali mentions it, the more trustworthy Mahāvamśa does not.[3] There seems to be

1. *Puṟanāṉūṟu Sorpoḻivugaḻ* (Saiva Siḍhaṇṭa Society Publication see lecture *Puṟanānuṟmu Varalārum*).
2. K. A. N. Sastri *Paṇḍyan Kingdom* P. 17.
3. Upham, *Sacred Books of Ceylon* Vol. I, 288, Vol. II, 57-58.

something doubtful about its historicity and the Śangam works which sing so much about the greatnees of Karikāla do not mention the embankment of the cauvery. To Mr. P.T. Srinivāsa Aiyangar this was a difficulty and a stumbling block.[4] But to us it ought to give a further proof of the historical worth of these works, I had almost said, the worth which is greater than that of the inscriptions.

4. P. T. Srinivasa Aiyangar, *History of the Tamils*, 360-62.

CHAPTER III

The Political Order

General Characteristics :—

The Śaṅgam works mention names of so many kings that both their geneology and chronology are highly problematical. We have only to content ourselves with stating that so far as unexceptional historical rendering is concerned we may delineate Uruvaphrēr Iḷañjētcēnni, his son Karikāla and his two sons, Nalankiḷḷi and Neḍuṅkiḷḷi among the Chōḷas, Muthukuḍumi Peruvaḻudi, Āriyapaḍaikaḍantha Neḍuñjeḻiyan, Veṟṟivēṟcheḻiyan and Talayālaṅkānathu ceruvenṟa Neḍuñjeḻiyan among the Pāṇḍyas and Imayavaramban Neḍuñceralātan, Chēran Śeṅguṭṭuvan and Māntaram Chēral Irumpoṟai among the Chēras. The geneology of the Chōḷas as shown above must be considered in the light of our present knowledge as *really without flaw*; while that of the other two dynasties is still unestablished, the order indicated above pointing only to some probability of the order of succession, though we know for a fact that the Pāṇḍyan Veṟṟivēṟceḻiyan was the son of Āriyapaḍaikadaṇtha Neḍuñjeḻiyan and the great Chēran Śeṅguṭṭuvan was the son of Imayavaramban.

The period here discussed was not only a period of great kings but also of great chieftains like Paḻayan Māṟan of Mōhūr (near modern Madurai), Nannan Vēṇmān and Villavan Kōthai (both of the West coast of the Peninsula), Nalliyakōḍan of Oimānāḍu (in modern south Arcot), Tithyan (Tinnevelly region) and the whole band of Vēḷir chieftains - Pāri of Parambunaḍ, Vēḷ Pēgan (of the Palni region), Vēḷ Evvi (of the region of Pudukottai), Vēḷ Āvi (Āye) and the Irukkuvēḷ of Koḍumbāḷur and others - besides many warlike tribes like Kōśar, Eyinar, Kaṭṭiar and Karunāḍar. That this picture of the political condition of the times sketched for us in the Śaṅgam poems is fully in keeping with the historical condition of the times is

borne out not only from what we know of the history of the evolution of the state but also from evidences of ancient writers, who had seen India in the early times. One such evidence may be seen from the writings of Megasthenes, the Greek Ambassador in the Mauryan court, who refers to no less than 118 tribes with regal status in the India of his day.[1] This was in the last quarter of the IV century B. C. The Śaṅgam poems in a later age indicate the process of historical evolution in which we find the tribes decreasing in number but existing as well-established units by the side of the king. In the first centuries of our era to which these poems particularly refer a state had been reached when individual monarchs rose on the scene to bring these refractory elements under control of the rule of a king. Śilappadikāram and Paṭṭinappālai make pointed reference to this when they refer to the victories effected by the Chera and the Chola over these differing elements.[2]

A second feature of this period lay in the well-authenticated inroads of people from the north into the south of India. The long poem Paṭṭinappālai sung in praise of Karikāla begins with the expression "vaḍavar vāda" meaning that the men from the north were defeated by the valour of Karikāla and the frequent references of the same kind occuring in the Śaṅgam works generally give us unmistakable indication about the state of affairs at this time.

Historians are at pains, however, to identify these men from the north. Were they the Kalabhras whose reign succeeds that of the three great Tamil dynasties in the south almost immediately after the Śaṅgam period? There seems to be much truth behind this supposition which we shall indicate later. What calls for our attention here is the doubt whether they could be the Mauryas. Certain historical writers indeed speak of the Mauryan invasion

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1. Mc Crindle; *Megasthenes and Arrian*, P. 204
2. Sil. XXVII, 124-126; Pattinappalai, 275-84 See also Patirru, 44, Agam, 125, Puram, 66 etc.

of south India during this period.[1] It may be that some descendants of the imperial *Mauryas still continued in power* at the dawn of the Christian êra. The reference by poet Māmūlanār to the Kōśar as the vanguard of the invading Mauryas is pressed into service here [2] There is no doubt that the Kōśar occupied during the period an exalted postion of supremacy in Kongu as is vouched for in Śilappadikāram. A people known throughout south India for their honesty and wise counsel combined with great warlike capacity flitting through the poems of these early times[3] were these Kōśar about whom we do not, unfortunately, possess more details.

2. The Great Kings

The poem Porunarāṟṟuppaḍai describing Karikāla "as the son of Uruvapahrēr"[4] undoubtedly points to Iḷañjētcenni (who alone bears this title) as his father. The poem Paṭṭinappālai serves at the same time with much reliable information about Karikāla. These works acquaint us with the fact of the succession of this great king that was hotly disputed between him and the other claimants to the throne, who kept him in prison. Among the great historical figures of early times, Karikāla stands out prominently and he signalised his accession by passing *literally through a path of fire.*[5] *He opened his reign* with valiant battles fought against numerous enemies with whom his own Chēra and Pāṇḍya contemporaries were lined. One such battle fought and won at Veṇṇi where he is said to have vanguished kings and no less than eleven chieftains and princelings is sung in Aganānuru.[6] Another poem in the same anthology acquaints us with another great battle Vāgaipaṟanthalai - in which nine chieftains are said to have

1. S. K. Iyengar; *Beginnings*, pp for the first and perhaps the best exposition of this.
2. Agam. 251
3. Agam, 90, 11; Kuṟuntogai, 73, Maduraikkañji 508 509 etc.
4. Porunaraṟṟuppaḍai, 1. 130.
5. The title ' karikāl' literally means "burnt leg."
6. Agam, 246, see also Purananuru 66.

been defeated.[1] The poem Paṭṭinappālai makes mention of several tribes of people like Aruvāḷar, Vaḍavar, Karunāḍar and Pothuvar having been defeated by the King in these battles.[2]

The poems of the age describe Karikāla as a great conquering king, one among them-the epic Śilappadikāram-informing us that he carried his victorious arms as far as the flaunting Himalayas in the north. The Himalayan expedition followed by the conquest of the region referred to here has been in past times thrown out by scholars as a himalayan exaggeration. Recent researches, however, have proved the contrary to be true. The northern region was not unknown to the south even in those early times as was heretofore supposed, and antiquarian studies carried out on the finds of the Indus valley, as has been already shown in Chapter 1, only go to confirm the opposite of what had been so far supposed. Further in the first centuries of our êra to which -his event must be referred the central authority was extremely weak in the north making the possibility of a southern invasion of the north plausible. Lastly the statements made in our literary works with regard to this expedition is so very detailed and circumstantial, mentioning the cause, course and results of the campaign (atleast with regard to the later campaign of Senguṭṭuvan, the hero of the third part of the epic) that one has to accept the truth of the northern expeditions, atleast those of Senguṭṭuvan.

Great were the victories of Karikāla ; but greater still was his peace policy. In opposition to the present ideals of war and conquest the ancient Tamil kings were eager for conquest only for the sake of reputation and personal glory rather than for accession of territory to their dominion. This is clear both from the epic narration describing Senguṭṭuvan's campaign in the north and by the fact

1. Agam, 125. These battle-fields must have been in the Tanjore area. Prof. Sāstri identifies Venni with Kōvilveṇṇi near Tanjore (*Colas*; 1, 40).

2. Pattinappālai lines 275-82.

that in spite of the conquests in the north attributed both to Karikāla and Senguṭṭuvan neither had any permanent dominion in the north. The later argument is taken by some to disprove the fact of these northen expeditions. It must be, however, obvious by now that this cannot be so, as it would be otherwise impossible to understand why the actual territory assigned to Karikāla is so small in comparison with the numerous undisputed victories attributed to him in south India.

Thus we are led to consider the nature of the rule which Karikāla gave to the people under his care. The ancient ideal of rulership in the Tamil country insisted on the smallness of territory, a small kingdom where an intensified system of good administration could be made possible. It is said of our ruler that he destroyed many forests and increased the space for habitation, built many tanks and thus augmented the facility for irrigation.[1] The growth of industries also is referred to in the poems of the day, not only those for which south India was well known from early times like weaving, building, conch-cutting and jewelry-making but more complicated and minute trades like toy-making, chariot-making and making of garments from the hair of rat. Working of salt pans is particularly mentioned.[2] Karikālan is said to have built the new city of Uṛaiyūr, from where we find one of his sons, Kiḷḷivaḷavan, ruling the kingdom.[3]

To Karikāla must be attributed the initiation of what we may call the two capital system in Tamil polity. With the building up of Uṛaiyūr the Chōḷa kingdom came to have two capitals - Puhār and Uṛaiyūr-from each one of which we find one of his sons ruling after the period of the father. Thus Nalaṅkiḷḷi ruled from Puhār and Kiḷḷivaḷvan from Uṛaiyūr, first mentioned by the poet Ālat tūrkiḷar in a song found in the Puṛam collection.[4]

1. Paṭṭinappālai, ll. 283-84
2. Paṭṭinappālai, 1.29
3. *Ibid*, 289 ff
4. Puṛam, 69.

Karikāla was a patron of letters and learning. His capture of Karūr from the Chēra hands is vouched for in one of the songs in Puṟanāṉūṟu[1] and several poets sing in praise of him. It must be noted that patronage to learning was the hall-mark of the times and these were kings who were poets themselves. The Chōḷa king Kopperunchōḷan is an example; and many poems in the Kuṟuntogai collection are attributed to him.[2] Many poems in Puṟanāṉūṟu, on the other hand, record the homage of two great poets, Piśirāntai and Pōthiyār, for this great royal poet.[3] He must be placed in the line of Choḷa kings after Kiḷḷivaḷavan.

Perunaṟkiḷḷi perhaps the last Chōḷa of the Śangam age, is famed as the king who performed the *rājasuyayāga* which is a sufficient indication pointing to the wide conquests achieved by him.[4] He is unique in being depicted by the contemporary poets as the friend of the reigning monarchs of both the Chēra and the Paṇḍya house - Chēramān Mārivenko and Pāṇḍyan Ugraperuvaḻudi.[5] It would appear that the contemporary Chēra and Pāṇḍya kings of the times were even subordinate feudatories of Perunaṟkiḷḷi. He inaugurated a state of friendly co-existence among the three great ruling houses of ancient Tamilakam, not easily understandable to the student of our ancient political warfare, for the establishment of his own supremacy among the rulers of the different dynasties.

In some such sense, therefore, Perunaṟkiḷḷi was even greater than Karikāla and he enjoyed in full measure all the glory that war and conquest and good administration naturally begot. In the early history of South India we find the Chōḷas leading the way in this respect for a good part of time. The Pāṅḍyas were not much behindhand, though they distinguished themselves in one particular in which none can stand comparison with them and that lay in the

1. Puṟam, 36
2. Kuṟuntogai, 20, 53, 129, 147 etc.
3. Puṟam, 215, 217, 230-22
4. *Ibid*, 367.
5. Puṟam, 567

great fillip they gave to learning and the learned.[1] The earliest known king of south India is also a Pāṇḍya King Mudukuḍumi Peruvaḷudi.

Pāṇḍyan Mudukuḍumi Peruvaḷuthi was a great conqueror also. A song in Puṟanāṉūṟu tells us that he ploughed the land of the enemies with white-mouthed asses and sowed them with thistle.[2] Truly an implacable king he appears to have been also a veritable combination of piety and devotion with many *yāgās* to his credit, begetting him the title *Palyāgaśālai* with which he is adorned in the pages of our classical poetry. Of this distinct northern type of devotion and worship, the *yāga*, we thus hear for the first time now and this seems to give some support to the view that the Pāṇḍyas were a ruling race which had migrated from the north to the south of India.[3] Yet it is to the rulers of this house that Tamil owes a great deal, if not of its origin, certainly its early growth.[4]

If we do not hear much about the actual victories won by Pāṇḍyan Mudukuḍumi ; we have greater details about another great Pāṇḍya, Neduñjeḷiyan of the fame of a victory over the Āryas (*Āryapaḍaikaḍanda*). It is not possible to say definitely who these Āryas were or whether the King defeated an invading foe or, like the great Karikāla, undertook an expedition to the north. It is however clear that many people from the north had invaded the south during the period and the victory referred to must have been perhaps won at the time of one of these invasions.

Scholars are of divided opinion with regard to the identification of this king with the ill-fated ruler of Silap-

1. The Śangam was itself a creation of the Pāṇḍya.
2. Puṟam, 15.
3. The great epics of the north, both Rāmāyana and Mahābārata, mention the Pāṇḍyas prominently, their capital, Kapātapura and the pearls got from the sea at Korkai. Megasthenes speaks of the Pāṇḍya as the Indian Hercules. In Aśōka's time, his son is said to have married a Pāṇḍya princess
4. We thus hark back to our theory of early migrations from the north to south in India.

padikāram and it is not yet possible to decide the issue. The difficulty is worsened by the appearance of another king with the same name - Neḍuñjeḻiyan of Talayālaṅkānam fame. But it can be safely assumed that this last king, the hero of Neḍunalvāḍai and Maduraikkāñji, must be different from the other two, since in the two works solely dedicated to him there is no reference either to the events mentioned in Śilappadikāram or the fact of the Āryan defeat. The battle of Talayālaṅkānam which won such great fame to the Pāṇḍyan king must have been a very great battle, since many poems of the period refer to it [1] and Neḍuñjeḻiyan is said to have vowed his ruin if he failed in the war. We have however no evidence on the details of the war, but for this that the Pāṇḍyan king won a victory in this battle over the combined forces of the Chōḷa and the Chēra and five princelings or chieftains.[2]

To find the greatest kings of the Chēra line it is again to the Śaṅgam poems that we must turn. These rulers are uniquely fortunate in having an almost connected account of their rule in one single poem, the Patiṟṟuppattu (familiarly called in English as the 'Ten-tens'), which is added to by the information we get from numerous stray stanzas besides the epic work attributed to the scion of the Chēra family, the well-known Śilappadikāram, which gives a full account of the greatest of the Chēras, Śeṅguṭṭuvan, his court, administration, wars, his kingdom and the people. With the evidence of all these sources before us we are able to say that among all the rulers who ruled over the region of the west coast the rulers depicted in these works are the greatest.

The value of the Ten-tens as a historical source is much vitiated by the fact that it is not always possible to identify the rulers mentioned therein with those referred to in the other poems. Thus the name of Śeṅguṭṭuvan himself is mentioned by a great poet like Paraṇar as Kaḍal-

1. Puram, 23, 25, 391; Agam, 36, 253. 256; Kur, 393.
2. *Ibid.*

piṟakkōṭṭiyavēḻkeḻukuṭṭuvan and the identification of the two is not obvious. There is also some discrepancy in their respective achievements as mentioned in the two sources.

In an unexceptionally historical account, therefore, we have to leave some of the rulers as being unidentifiable. In final analysis we are able to spot out only a few important kings, about whom there could be little doubt, though their geneology remains unconnected. Such are the rulers Perunsōṟṟuudiyanseralātan (lit., the Chēra of the Big Feed), Imayavarmban Neḍuñjērālātān (lit., the Chēra whose territorial limits reached the foot of the Himalayas), Cheran Śeṅguṭṭuvan, Peruñcheralātan, and Yānaikaṉsēy Māntaramcēral Irumpoṟai (Chēra of the elephant-look)

But each one of these is justly famous for what he achieved. The first is praised for the great feast that he had held to those who fought on the battle-field of the Bhārata war[1]. Earlier writers have referred them to the heroes of Kurukshetra and some hold to this still, arguing on the great antiquity of the ancient lines of Tamil rulers. Such, however, does not appear to be the truth. This would perhaps refer to some kind of annual commemoration of the heroes of this war at the end of which the feast referred to must have been held. Mr. P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar expresses an opinion that at the end of a play commemorating the Bhārata War the great feast was held.[2] The lines of the poem under reference indicate that the Chēra king fed the armies of both sides "without any distinction" that was in question. Yet in spite of all these possibilities it may be that the poet is here just trying to connect the Chēras with the family of the ancient Pāṇḍavas, to satisfy the well-known desire of our early kings to get connected to some ancestor, sufficiently famous, if not mythical. One thing is, however, certain, namely that Chēralāthan was a

1. Puram, 2
2. See P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar, *History of the Tamils.*

great and ancient king, who had done much to give reputation to his family.

The Chēra Śeṅguṭṭuvan, also called the Red Chēra,[1] is the hero-king of Śilappadikāram and Imayavaramban was his father, as is clear from the same work. Both the kings were also related to Karikāla This is inferred from the reference to Kiḷḷivaḷavan, Karikāla's son, as the brother-in-law of Śeṅguṭṭuvan in this epic.[2] Both father and son led their victorious army as far as the Himalayas. As indicated earlier, the conception of such an expedition to the north was feāsible to these kings of early times and the epic Śilappadikāram mentions the affront caused by the nothern kings as the immediate cause of Śeṅguṭṭuvan's invasion,[3] which gives a greater plausibility to the reality of the event.

Śeṅguṭṭuvan is said to have honoured Kaṇṇagi, the chaste wife of Kōvalān who had been unjustly murdered by the Pāṇḍya, by building a temple in her honour wherein he set up her statue. The ceremony of the setting up of the Kaṇṇagi statue in the Chēra country became at once famous. It was attended by numerous princes and princelings of south India reaching as far as Malwa and the great king of Ceylon, Gajabāhu, also attended the celebrations as evidenced by Śilappadikāram.[4] The latter fact is supported by evidence from the island itself.[5] That numerous princes were feudatory to the Chēra king at this time is beyond doubt attested to by the whole corpus of the Śaṅgam poems particularly by the Patiṟṟuppattu.[6]

The Gajabāhu-Śeṅguṭṭuvan synchronism is the sheet anchor of the Śaṅgam chronology, as has been shown

1. It is perhaps more corrcct to translate this name as "the good Chera" (the Tamil செம்மை meaning good.')
2. Silappadikarm XXVII, 118
3. Ibid, XXVI, 11. 184-212.
4. Silappadikaram, XXX, 156 ff.
5. See the evidence of the Ceylonese chronicles *Rajavaliya*, *Amba-p-upata* and *Amba Vidumana*; See also The Ceylon *Antiquary*, li pp. 128 ff.
6. Silappadikaram (Swaminatha Iyer's Edn, 1927) P. 30.

at the outset of our study. Though neither the cause nor the duration of Gajabāhu's stay in the Chēra court is in any way clear to us, the statement of the epic Śilappadikāram must be taken to point to an important feature in the foreign policy of the Chēra king which seems to have outstepped the bounds of South India. Its importance from the religious points of view was great, since as one present at the birth of the Pattini cult Gajabāhu appears to have been its propagator in the island of Ceylon. The epic is unusually clear on this point and the *uraiperukatturai* bears out his part in this good work. The evidence is so clear that it makes it impossible to argue, like Mrs. Levina, that the Pattini cult is pre-Buddhistic in origin or like our own late Ephemerist, Diwan Bahadur L. D, Swamikannu Pillai, that this cult travelled into India from Ceylon.[1]

The period of Śeṅguṭṭuvan is also noteworthy for the great prosperity that he gave to his people. It is in his reign that we hear for the first time of piracy being quelled[2] The title "kaḍalpiṟakkōṭiya vēlkeḻukuṭṭuvan" the Patiṟṟuppattu gives the king, has been often taken to mean the king's conquests in the sea. The conquest meant must have been his victory over the pirates, who had infested the western coast. The evidence of the classical writers of ancient times and of Pliny in particular who speak of the great prevalence of piracy in the west coast of the peninsula chimes well with the evidence of Patiṟṟuppattu. The vast sea-borne trade of the times is also borne out by these evidences. Musiṟi close to modern Cranganore was undoubtedly a great and flourishing port and, as we shall see later, ships full of gold came sailing to the coast splashing against the white foam of the Periyār.

The entire western coast of the peninsula reaching out into the interior as far as Karūr in Tiruchirapalli district

1. Levina; *Ceylon Antiquary*, I, i, 29 ff; *Indian Ephemeris*, loc., cit.,

2. Patirruppattu, V.

and touching parts of Kongu or the modern districts of Coimbatore and Salem comprised the effective portion of Śenguṭṭuvan's kingdom. The capital was at Vañji, equated with Tiruvañcikkaḷam near Cranganore.[1] Much critical ink has been spent on this subject, one school of writers led by Prof. V. R. R. Dikshitar equating it with Karūr in Tiruchirapalli region. The present writer has discussed it at some length in his book on the Koṅgu Country, and there is no need to dilate on the same subject here. There is no doubt that Karūr was for a long time under Chēra rule and that a Chēra viceroy was actually appointed to take care of the Kongu part of the Chēra kingdom, which was far from the centre of administration. This Viceroy would appear to have had his seat at Karūr, as is evidenced by the testimony of Ptolemy speaking about this place as "Karoura regio Kerobothros", Karūr in the kingdom of the Chera prince. Beyond this nothing more can be argued for the importance of this place. The whole indentification of Vañji with Karūr hangs on the late information furnished by Tamil lexicons like Divakaram and Piṅgalandai, works compiled atleast 1000 years after, which give that name Vañji to Karūr. On the other hand, the Chēras of the Śaṅgam age are represented as having ruled over the hilly region of the west and they had their interest always in the west coast. The epic Śilappadikāram clearly points to this when it sings of Śeṅguṭṭuvan as "the victorious king of the western region" (kuḍathisai āḷum koṟṟa vēnthe(n)). The greatest argument against the indentification of Karūr with Vañji of the West coast, however, lies in the fact that while the former lay within the confines of Kongu the latter was within the Chēra Kingdom and the two were separate kingdoms,[2] so that it would be hard to find the capital of one kingdom within the confines of another Fortunes on the battlefield might have brought Karūr often into the

1. Silappadikaram; XXVII, 197. See also Canto XXV where the hilly nature of the Chera kingdom is clearly described. It is from here that the King is said to have started on his northern expedition not from Karur or even the region near Karur. See also Arokiaswami, *The Kongu Country*, pp. 64 ff.

2. Arokiaswami; op., cit., lo., cit.

hands of the Chēra but it often changed hands according to the changing fortunes of war.

3. The Tribes

One of the great and characteristic features of the Śaṅgam age was the existence of numerous war-like tribes and their leaders who held sway in different parts of south India during the period. The Maḷavar, the Kōśar, the Eyinar, the Aruvāḷar, the Koṅgar, Karunāḍar and Gaṅgar are some among them who are prominently mentioned in the poems of the times.[1] Earlier in point of time and in many ways more important than all the other tribes were the Nāgas in south India. It is not easy to decide the origin of the Nāga tribe. Writers like V. Kanakasabhai Pillai opine that they were indigenous to south India and that many of the tribes mentioned in our Tamil poems were mere branches of the Nāgas.[2] The story of the matrimonial alliance of Kiḷḷivaḷavan with Peelivaḷai, a Nāga princess, mentioned in Maṇimēkhalai, seems, on the other hand, to point to the foreign origin of these people. The twin-epics, Śilappadikāram and Maṇimēkhalai refer to God Indra helping the Chōḷas to take possession of Kavēripūmpaṭṭinam, their first capital, from the Nāgas by sending to the Chōlas the help of five giants,[3] which also seems to point to the same conclusion. There is, however, no doubt that the Nāgas in early times were highly civilised and were in power in several parts of south India. Śiṟupāṇaṟṟup-paḍi informs us of the beautiful piece of muslin presented to the chieftain Vēḷ Āye by the Nāgas, which he thought fit to present to god Śiva.[4] The supposed matrimonial alliance of the Chōḷa also points to the high status occupied by the Nāgas of those times.

Of the other tribes the Maḷavar and the Maṟavar were of the same category and generally occupied the

1. Sil. XXV, 156-159, Siru, 121-22.
2. Kanakasabhai, *Tamils*, 42 ff.
3. Sil., V. 95-97; Vi, 14-17; Mani, I, 19-24.
4. Siru, 96-99.

eastern coast of the peninsula. They are represented in our ancient poems as great bowmen, who used horses on the battlefield for the first time. Great chieftains like Piṭṭan Koṟṟan of the Kuthiraimalai region, Adigamān of Tagaḍūr, Paḷayan Māran of Madurai belonged to this tribe of war-like people. Avvai's poems are replete with instances of the greatness of Adigamān, "one of whose ancestors is said to have brought sugarcane from the heavens." That Paḷayan Māṟan besides being a great warrior, was also a good administrator is referred to in Maduraikkāñji in which his wise assembly is mentioned.[1]

The Eyinar were a hunting tribe known for their predatory habits. They worshipped Kāḷi with the sacrifice of buffaloes on her altār consulted omens and waited for opportunities for cattle lifting, robbery and murder. The epic Śilappadikāram indicates that during the period to which it refers the days of the Eyinar prosperity had set, which would imply that good and peaceful rule was being steadily established and monarchy was having a steady march over the vagaries of tribal rule. The Aruvāḷar occupied the region between the Pālār and the Peṇṇai and are described as rulers of the region, until Karikāla defeated them as is mentioned clearly in Paṭṭinappālai. The reference in the *Uraiperukaṭṭurai* of Śilappadikāram to the Koṅgiḷamkōśar performing their sacrifice to Pattinidēvi and having a festival in her honour along with the Chēra King Śeṅguṭṭuvan indicates that the Kōśar were an important tribe during the period. The Maduraikkāñji tells us that the assembly of Mōhūr was indeed honoured by the presence of the Kośar[1] Agam 205 describes them as truth-speaking people (vāymoḷinilaya Kôśar). Though the exact meaning of this description escapes us, it gives, according to some, a clue to identify them with the Satiyaputras of Aśokan inscriptions.[2] Prof. V. R. R. Dikshitar opined

1. Maduraikkanji, 508-9.
2. This identification made by Prof. Dikshitar still stands four square inspite of all the recent investigations on the subject. The view that they were allies of the Mauryas is also borne out by the poems of Mamulanār (see Dikshitar: *Indian Culture* 1, 97 ff. *Contra* Sastri; *South Indian History*).

that they were the original inhabitants of the Tuḷu country[1] that they extended their dominion into the Koṅgu region in due course and that they were great warriors and wise counsellors who were sought after and befriended by all the ruling powers of the day.

The Kongar referred to in Śilappadikāram along with the Kōśar were people connected with Koṇgu prominently as the Karunāḍar mentioned in the same reference belonged to the region of Karnāṭaka. When the Chēras had settled down in their region many groups of people of close affinity to them also settled down in the territory bordering on the Chēra country. The Kongar come under this classification of the Chēra family who possibly had occupied the Karkānāḍu, the region of the rocky soil. It was the hardness of soil and scarcity of water of the Kaṟka that had led them into Kongu, as is directly pointed out by Agam 79.

Who were the Gangar mentioned in the same reference? With the knowledge of epigraphic sources connected with Ġanga history that has come down to us this reference in Śilappadikāram only confirms the view that the history of the Gangas begins very early and that their first King Koṅganivarman, is to be placed in Kongu in the early years of the V century A. D.[2] The information given to us by the epic brings to light two other important facts of their history - the fact of their alliance with the "northern Aryas" and secondly their connections with a southern tribe called the Kaṭṭiar. The first is to be accepted in view of the Ganga connections with the Gaṇgaridae of Ptolemy and the Ganges valley. The Ganga connection with the Kattiar is spoken to clearly in the epic reference.[3] It must be held that this tribe was also a very warlike

1. See Arokiaswami, op-cit., pp. 122 ff.
2. To Mr. Rice, the Gangas were an off-shoot of the Kanvas (*Mysore Gezetteer*, II, ii, 592).
3. See also Agam 44, 226, etc., to understand the prowess of this tribe. The later-day Ghetti mudalis of Tāramangalam were perhaps an off-shoot of this tribe.

one that had occupied parts of Kongu and the Canarese country[1] during the period.

The family of the Vēḷs or Vēḷir of whom several great patrons of letters are mentioned in the Śangam poems and to whom reference has been made earlier also appear to have had the Ganges valley as their home of origin. The nine Vēḷir chieftains and the elevan chieftains said to have been defeated by the early Tamil kings in the ancient Tamil poems like Paṭṭinappālai are mentioned in combination with one or other of these tribes. There seems to be, therefore, more than a mere supposition in the view that in early times it was the Dravidian who had occupied the whole of India and that even when they had settled down in the south the migration from north to south and vice versa was for long in progress.

1. Arokiaswami; *Early History of the Vellar Basin*, pp. 17 ff.

CHAPTER IV

Administrative Mechanism

The art of administration had travelled far from primordial times during the period of our study and though the democratic conception of State government had not yet become established the administration of the times partook of the character of monarchy tempered by the best effects of the democratic principle.

The King was, however, the head of society and of government. As the head of the society he took the lead in every event of social importance like the festival of Indra, the setting up of the Pattini statue in Vañji and even in inaugurations of dance performances. The Śilappadikāram furnishes examples in all these particulars and indicates that even great rulers like Karikāla and Śeṅguṭṭuvan were no exceptions to this.[1] The peculiarity of the Tamil kingship lay in fact in the nearness in which the king kept himself to the people without at the same time losing his dignity. He dressed himself in a grandiose way with gold armlets on his arms, a gold anklet on the right leg and a necklace of pearls and precious stones hanging round his neck. He wore a crown usually of a conical shape made of gold and set with precious stones. He was always attended by numerous perfumers, garland-makers, betel-bearers, arecanut-servers, dressing valets, torch-bearers and not the least in importance a body of personal attenders like bodyguards who could be relied on for his defence. In a word, the ancient Tamil king was not lacking in anything we have learnt to associate with the pomp and glory of oriental monarchy.

He generally rode on an elephant or on horse back or in a chariot drawn by horses and at his entrance and

1. " In times of famine or pestilenee he was foremost to perform penances or sacrifices. He shared the joys and the sorrows of the people or at least the etiquette of the Court compelled him to do so." V. Kanakasabhai, *Tamils 1800 Years Ago*. 112.

exit drums rolled their sound announcing his coming in and going out. He sat on his throne while transacting official business with the white parasol lined with strings of pearls held over his head and sceptre in his hand. The ancient Tamils considered these three the drum, the sceptre and the white umbrella as the three great insignia of his office. The poets in our collections often refer to the king along with these insignia[1] and in many poems their significance is also explained. Thus in Puram 3, it is stated that "the white umbrella of victory is held aloft not to protect the king from the sun but as a symbol of the nature of the royal office which is to protect the people from suffering." In the same way the sceptre was considered as the symbol of royal justice. One of the poets of the period describes the sceptre as "the beautiful rod on which sleeps justice for all"[2] The drum known in Tamil polity as the *murasu* was generally considered as the symbol of war for which the king must ever be ready. We read in the Śaṅgaṁ poems that the king was so attentive to the sound of the drum, which was given when war was on, that he would bestir himself to get ready even when the drum that was hung up in the throne - hall sounded slightly touched by the passing breeze. In ancient ideology the king was associated with three kinds of *murasu*, the *murasu* of victory (veṟṟi muraśu), that of justice and that of charity (*koḍai muraśu*),[3] the three, in other words, which stood for and typified the three essential attributes of kingship. The drum was thus no mean thing. It was that which announced a war, a victory or the dispensation of charity. The war-drum was kept on a cot after a daily bath and the cot was considered as sacred.[4] It was considered so much part and parcel of the king that it was considered necessary for the victor in battle to seize the war-drum of the vanguished. The great Pāṇḍya king Neḍuñjeḻiyaṅ, victor

1. See, for example, in the Puram collection alone songs number 3, 23, 31, 35, 60, 62, 75, 175, 197, 213, 229, 241, 296 and 367.
2. Puram, 20.
3. Ibid, 59, 11, 12-13.
4. Puram, 50.

at Talayālaṅkānam, mentions this in particular when he vows vengeance against his enemies.[1]

Kingship descended by heredity from father to son. Puṟam 75 has a clear statement to this effect and we know from Paṭṭinappālai and Porunarāṟṟuppaḍai, the two long poems on Karikāla's reign, how the throne which was his right was attempted to be taken away by others and how he won it by literally walking through a path of fire. Kings of ancient Tamil land worked hard for the good of their subjects, harder perhaps than we could imagine. Their day was divided into three parts into which they fitted in their three important sections of work, devotion to god and study, care of administrative matters and companionship of poets whom they richly rewarded. They also frequently toured the country to put things in order and did not even spare themselves in the night, when they came round their capital city to watch and hear the people express their views about administration without their knowing it.

What staggers one in the Śaṅgam poems is the great wisdom displayed by these ancient Kings. The Puṟam collection alone contains numerous songs by the royal poets, like Pāṇḍyan Arivuḍainambi, Pāṇḍyan Neḍuñjeḻiyan of Talayālaṅkānam fame, Ollaiyūrthantha Būthapāṇḍyan, Kaḍaluḷ mārintha Iḷamperuvaḻuthi and the Chōḷa king Kuḷāmuṟṟathu thuñjiya Kiḷḷivaḷavan, which bear out their high ideals of justice, forbearance, love of learning and the learned, esteem of family life, their keen sense of protection of the subjects, readiness to go to war and defeat the invader and many other great qualities that go to adorn feeble humanity.[2] One may rest content with two examples of these words of wisdom that we have inherited from these great kings. In Puṟam 185 Toṇḍaimān Iḷanthiraiyan compares the job of the administrator to that of a cart-driver who should take care not to run

1. Ibid, 72.
2. In the Puram collection alone the songs attributed to the Pāṇḍya kings number more than 35.

the wheel on slippery ground, lest it should lead him into trouble. In Puṟam 72 King Neḍuñjeḻiyan, Victor at Talayālaṅkaṉam, brings together all the great ideals of good kingship. This great battle was fought when the king was still a boy against the combined forces of both the Chēra and the Chōḷa and their allies, so that the victory won was so great as to make him deserve the title, "Victor at Talayālaṅkānam" (Talayālaṅkānathucheruvenṟa Pāṇḍyan Neḍuñjeḻiyan). Apparently before he went to battle against this formidable foe his ministers and advisers were without hope of success. But the king did not want to stay behind before the call of duty; which he portrays in that beautiful song of his :

> "The enemies who have come to fight with me may ridicule the greatness of my kingdom and come to fight with me with their huge elephants with their ringing bells, chariots, horses and soldiers well-versed in the art of fighting. But I go to fight with them and if do not rout them in the fierce battle defeating them and capturing their *murasu* let my people who seek their happiness under my umbrella deride me, let not a poet of the long galaxy led by poet Marudan of Mangudi sing of me thereafter and let me become so poor as not to be able to help the needy that come to me." [1]

Ministers, Advisers and Officers :

The above reference is enough to show that the king had recourse to advisers in the course of his administration. The literature before us frequently mentions them as *śuṟṟam* which would literally mean the men who always surrounded the king giving him advice whenever needed. The Tamil poems describe them as men with right views, who will not swerve from the path of justice and stick to their decision without favour or prejudice.

The epic Śilappadikāram gives us some interesting details about the working of the ministerial machinery during this period. Two administrative councils designa-

1. Puṟam, 72.

ted as the *Aimperuṅkuḷu* and the *Eṇpērāyam* are mentioned in this epic which refers to Śeṅguṭṭuvan's expedition to the Himalayas.[1] What they actually signified is beyond the realm of settled fact. The two commentators of this work, Aḍiyārkkunallār and the Arumpathavuraiāsiriyar, differ among themselves. The former explains the *aimperuṅkūḷu* as consisting of popular representatives, chosen Brahmanas, doctors, astrologers and ministers and the *eṇpērāyam* as consisting of the royal attenders. The second commentator, who is later in point of time, describes the first as consisting of ministers, Brahmanas, military commanders, ambassadors and spies and the second, of people's representatives, army men representing the four wings of cavalry, infantry, elephant crops and the charioteers, personal advisers and attendants. It is difficult to reconcile the views of the two commentators, though one may venture to state that the first was a high level council consisting of ministers, priests and official heads while the second was a council of people's representatives and army men. In spite of difference between them it ought to be obvious that the explanation of the two commentators more or less agree with regard to the composition of the *aimperuṅkuḷu* or the council of the five which seems to have consisted of five groups (*kuḷu*), while that of the eight (*eṇpērāyam*) is called *perāyam* or great assembly (in contradistinction to the *āyam* or the *manram* of the age) where the representatives of the people sat.[2]

It appears at first sight that the two interpretations of the commentators differ absolutely from each other but for the inclusion of the royal ministers in both the

1. Silappadikāram, V, 157 and the comments thereon ; XXVI, 38. The contemporary work, Maṇimēkhalai, mentions the same assemblies in I, 17

2. Dr. S. K. Aiyangar, it may be mentioned, seems to agree with this view, when he writes that the interpretation of the *aimperuṅkulu* can be identified, though no Tamil authority or writer has yet done so. (See his *Administrative Institutions in South India, p.* 20)

lists of the members of the *aimperuṅkuḻu*. It would also appear, broadly considered, that while the lists of Aḍiyārkkunallār refer to officers of government, those of the later commentator refers to those of the royal household.[1] The interpretation of the two commentators is rather difficult to understand though the commentators would not have given lists absolutely differing among themselves. It is, however, odd to mention the personal attendants of the king, whom the late Mr. Kanakasabhai details consisting of "perfumers, garland-makers, betel-bearers, arecanut - servers, armourers, dressing vallets, torch or light-bearers and body-guards", as forming the grand assembly of the eight.[2]

In support of our identification Śilappadikāram itself offers a description of the assembly of the five when the death of the Pāṇḍyan king is narrated. The passage in question speaks of the utter astonishment of the *prohitā*, of the court of justice, revenue officers and others of the royal household who were then in the court.[3] Again when the expedition of Śēnguṭṭuvan to the Himalayan region is narratted the *aimperuṅkuḻu* is mentioned as "araśuviḷangu avaiyam" and then the royal officers are mentioned.[4] Maduraikkāñji mentions the assembly of the five in the same manner with this difference that the *kavithi* or revenue officers and the *nārperum kuḻu*, the four great boards are mentioned separately.[5] The learned author of Pingalandai in a later day makes the same kind of classification when he mentions the *aimperuṅkuḻu* and the *eṇvahaithuṇaivar* and completely ignores the members constituting the *eṇpērayam* of Aḍiyārkkunallār.[6]

The officers of the *aimperuṅkuḻu* as described here functioned apparently in departments under heads of departments. This is to be inferred from the mention

1. V. Kanakasabhai, *Tamils* pp.109-10
2. Ibid, p. 110.
3. Śilappadikāram, XXII, 8-11
4. Ibid XXVI, 38ff
5. Maduraikkāñji, 409-12
6. Pingalandai, V, 44-47

of the chieftain Aḻumbil Vēḷ as the head of the Chēra administration in Śilappadikāram.[1] In the same way Villavan Kōthai is mentioned as the army chief.[2] Each ministry must have functioned as a board ; hence the term *kuḻu* or group used to designate the council of ministers. We have absolutely no idea as to how the ministers were selected, though we know that the Kuṟaḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuvar lays special stress on learning and good birth for all members of government especially ministers and ambassadors.[3] Whether any election was conducted by any system like that of *kuḍavōlai* mentioned in inscriptions of the X century is more than we can say, though Writers like Dr. S. K. Aiyangar and Prof. V. R. R. Dikshitar seem to think that it was so.[4] They compare the *aimperuṅkuḻu* with the *Pañchavaravāriyam* of the inscriptions, which is obviously a mistake, since the *vāriyam* here referred to was a village assembly in charge of collecting tax for the king. While the name Pañchavaravāriyam itself refers literally to the " the chosen people for the purpose of collecting five kinds of taxes ", an inscription of the time of Rajendra I from Tirukalithattai (Tanjore Dt,) actually records the fact that the village assembly bound itself to pay all taxes on the local temple including paddy for the Pañchavaravāriyam in return for 65 kāśus paid to the assembly by the temple authorities.

The two assemblies that of the Five and that of the Eight functioned as administrative bodies, though their function was generally advisory in character. It may, however, be presumed that their advice was rarely rejected by the king. Their important function was judical though the former seems to have been solely in charge of it. Such is the evidence of Maduraikkāñji, which describes the assembly of the Five as consisting of men who knew the law so well and whose sense of justice was so well known that people who approached them

1. Śilappadikāram, AXV, XXVIII, 205.
2. Ibid., XXVI, 251 ; XXV, 150 ff.
3. Kural, 681.
4. Aiyangar ; *Anc. India* 169 ; Dikshitar ; *Hindu Adm. Institutions*, 358.

with their cases had no fear of miscarriage of justice.[1] The assembly sings the Maduraikkāñji must take care, " not to get unreasonably angry or childishly simple" and maintain its own dignity.[2] The king however was the supreme administrator of the law.[3]

A third function of these assemblies was to form the king's entourage in processions and festivals. Śilappadikāram mentions them in the procession of the Indra festival in Puhār.[4] On the inauguration of the dance performance of Mādhavi it is said the king led the procession with the Aimperuṅkuḻu.[5] In Śeṅguṭṭuvan's march from the royal capital on his northen expedition members of the two assemblies are again mentioned as accompanying the king.[6] The idea of having the members of the assemblies to accompany the king in ceremonial processions is part of the pomp that needs no explanation. Dr. S. K. Aiyangar in his *Administrative Institutions in South India* would, however, imply that this custom had been borrrowed from what had obtained in the north of India apparently from the Vedic times, when the Ratnins accompanied the king in such procession,[7] and were responsible to crown him. The comparision does not prove anything and it is quite possible for the two systems to have operated independently.

What is to be noted, on the other hand, is that in spite of all the glory attaching to the ancient king, the ethos of Indian administration has been in the direction of limited or popular monarchy. This was seen in south India from very early times even more than in the north and each followed its own model of administration. Every local unit, however small and in whatever corner it was situated, was administered by a local assembly, the germ of the

1. Maduraikkāñji, 489—92.
2. Ibid.
3. Śilappadikāram, XXVI, 160 ff.
4. Ibid V. 155 ff.
5. Śilappadikāram, III, 125 ff.
6. Ibid XXVI, 137 ff.
7. Aiyangar; *Adm. Institutions*, 22—23.

modern panchayat called in our literature as the *avai* and the *manṛam*. Our literary sources typically describe this assembly as aṛankūravaiyam, "the assembly known for its just decisions" It consisted of elected representatives generally, while in small villages all the men after a certain age participated in it. Hence the distiniction which often occurs in the Śaṅgam poems to the young members (iḷayōr) and the senior (muthiyōr) members of the *manṛam*. The distinction made in these works to Iḷaṅkōśar and Muthukōśar points in the same direction.

The government at the centre not only gave its staunch support to these popular assemblies of the local units but also supervised their needs, the king himself doing it in person sometimes. The local governments also acted as checks upon the royal will and the king frequently used them as feelers of public opinion. The poems of the day also mention a few of the *deus ex machina* variety, which sought to act as checks upon an erring king, the *bhūtas* of the *śadhukkam* and the image or *pāvai* that shed tears whenever the king went wrong. These are mentioned in Śilapadikāram (canto v) which describes Puhār, the Chōḷa capital. The *pāvai* acted as a gentle reminder while the *bhūtas* took an active turn. Sober history may refuse to recognise these as sober facts, though one should always remember that even miracles have had a place in effectively influencing this work-a-day world. The death of Pāṇḍyan Neḍuñjeḻiyan of a broken heart when it was proved to him that his judgement on Kōvalan was wrong, mentioned in clear terms in Śilapadikāram, well substantiates the heights of justice to which the ancient Tamil king had reached. That must also have been the measure of good administration that was the order of the day.

The role played by the bards and poets of the period as advisers and moderators of good government is one that is writ large in the poems they have left to us.[1] A poet beautifully advises the king to levy as few taxes as possi-

1. Arokiaswami, *J. I. H. XXVIII, Pt. III. No. 84.*

ble and gives the example of an elephant allowed to roam over the entire field to feed itself to show what a bad thing it would be to fleece the people with numerous taxes.[1] Another poet Kōvūr kiḻār advises the Chōḷa king Neḍuṇkiḷḷi besieged at Āvūr to rise up and fight the foe for the good of his people.[2] Examples of this kind can be multiplied; there is no doubt that through these poets the aristrocracy of intellect combined with monarchy to bring out in the result the best kind of democracy. True aristrocracy was thus grafted on to a system severely democratic and these instead of destroying monarchy only rendered it all the more just and lovable, which combined in itself all the three forms of government known to constitutionalists of modern times, a combination truly of opposing principles helping to evolve an effective system.

The king for his part understood the needs of his people and strove every nerve to serve them. "The tiger will give up its cubs" says a poet "only when it had breathed its last. So is the king with regard to his people."[3] Another poet describes the fertility of the soil in these days by saying that the small piece of land enough for a female elephant to lie yielded enough for seven male elephants to feed; and many are the places in which the fertilising waters of the rivers are mentioned in our sources.

The general items of revenue for the king consisted of land-tax and customs and the money given as irai by the subordinate feudatories. The customs are referred to in Pattinappālai[4] where the customs officials and the method of levying the customs are mentioned. The seal of the king was affixed to goods that had paid the customs in Puhār.[5]

1. Puram 184.
2. Puram 44.
3. Puram, 42.
4. Paṭṭinappālai, 120 ff.
5. Ibid.

The sources of revenue and the amount collected by way of revenue seem thus to have been small especially in comparison with the numerous sources in which the modern state earns its income. It is said that the tribute paid by the chieftains and neighbouring kings was great and it is a source that cannot be employed now. Besides the items on which the state income had to be spent in those ancient times were themselves few in number and the value that money fetched then was much greater than to day.

There was yet one circumstance that made the work of the ruler in this period incomparably difficult and that was the job of protecting the people from the invading foe, which was cast upon the king very frequently. Hence *arose the famous* poem of Mōśikīranār, that has now become classic in the Tamil speaking world : "Man does not live by rice and water but by the valourous king who knows that it is his duty to protect his people from the enemy."[2] Another poet, Kuṟuṅgōḻiyūr Kiḻār, speaks thus referring to the protection given by the Chēra king Māntarm Chēral Irumporai to his subjects :

> "His subjects felt no other heat in his time than that of the sun and their own hearth."[3]

These statements of the poets and many others of the same kind make us alive to the fact that war was real and frequent in the days referred to. Wars were fought not only for defence but also with a desire to extend one's territories or to save suffering people of neighbouring kingdoms from tyranny or misrule. Last but not least was the cause of unaccepted prosposals for marriage. When the demand of a king *for the hand of* the neighbouring king's daughter was not heeded to generally it resulted in war.[4] In many ways war was made to sit near

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1. Taxes in those days were paid both in kind and cash. The coin *kāśu* is mentioned in these poems.
2. Puṟam, 186.
3. Ibid, 20, lines 7—9
4. This is well exemplified in Puṟam, 336—54.

the doors of kings and they had to be always prepared for an emergency at all times.

This could be but little surprising in a polity of primordial times. Tolkāppiyam, the early grammer of the Tamils, speaks centuries preceding the Christian êra of war and the various formalities to be observed in warring. The detailed way in which this work describes the ancient warfare of the Tamils leaves little doubt in our mind that to them war was a necessary concomitant The grammarian distinguishes seven stages of war, the commencement of war, the invasion, and counter invasion, the battering of the fort, the resistance, the hand-to-hand fight and the end. Each stage was symbolised by those engaged in it wearing a particular flower. Thus vetchi, karanthai, vāñji, uḻiñai, notchi, and thumbai distinguished the first six stages and the victor of the battle adorned himself with vāgai.

Such was the mental state of the people of the times that every one of them trained himself for war and besides the army maintained by the kings potential soliders were all over the country to join the royal force in times of need. The frequent wrestling matches and bouts that signalised every festival in the country only served to increase the war-mindeness of the people. Even kings trained themselves in such activities and Puṟam 80 mentions the victory won by the Chōḷa king Pōrvaikō Perunaṟkiḷḷi with the famed wrestler of Amūr. One has to glance at the collection of the Puṟam to see the valour displayed by even wo men. Song 279 in the collection gives a worthy example an d it reads in the beautiful translation of the late Mr. Kanakasabahai :

> "Alas, how bold is she the worthy matron of the warrior tribe. It was only the day before yesterday that her father cut down an elephant on the battle-field and fell bravely fighting with the foes, and yesterday her husband routed a whole array of elephants and was slaughtered on the same field, and yet to-day when she heard the war-drum she seemed to be filled with joy and gave her only son a white cloth to wear, combed his hair and putting a lance into his hand, bade him go to the battle-field."

Puram 312 mentions the duties of various people and that of a son in a family :

> " It is my duty to bring him forth, it is the duty of the blacksmith to give him the pointed lance, his duty it is to destroy elephants on the battle-field and return with victory."

The King maintained all the four kinds of armies mentioned in Indian literature the chariot, the elephant, the cavalry and the infantry, besides the navy. The possession of the navy by the Tamil King in the early times to which we refer is a fact both well attested and singular. The poets sing of the navy of the Chēra that guarded the sea-port at Vāñji so well that other ships could not enter except with its knowledge and of the Chōḷa who ordered the breeze to blow for his navy to go.[1] The Chēra king Śeṅguṭṭuvan is reputed for his naval victories[2] as has been already mentioned.

When war was on the king sometimes sent out invitations to the neighbouring chiefs to join him in his campaign. At least three poems in the Puṟanāṉūṟu collection bear witness to this.[3] The beginning of war was often announced by the capture of the cows of the enemy's kingdom. This curious practice seems to have grown out of the Tamil ideology that Brahmanas, cows, women, the old and the crippled were to be considered as sacred and not to be molested by war and the cows being unintelligent beings it was thought necessary to lift them away from the battle scene. The announcement of war was always made public in the enemy's kingdom so that the above mentioned people may vacate it in time. The king took a ceremonial bath and began his march after liberally dōnating to poets and others. He was garlanded with the flower announcing the beginning of the invasion and followed by his army drawn up in proper order and accompanied by the members of his assemblies the king proceeded on his march to the

1. Puṟam, 66
2. Patiṟṟuppattu, V. 369
3. Puṟam, 122, 284, 320.

beating of the war drum and the flowing of conch-shells. The enemy king saw the approaching army through observers placed on high situations and prepared himself for war. The cities and particularly the capital cities were then surrounded by a regular forest of trees, after which rose the fort in which the king would take shelter separated from the forest by a deep moat. First the forest was cut down to make way for the invading army, the moat was filled up, the ramming of the fort followed by means of the elephant force and behind the elephant crops stood the chariot, cavalry and the infantry. Lances were hurled from either side and the enemy aimed particularly at the ramming elephant. The failure of the elephant crops meant the failure of the whole army. Hence it is that Tamil poets speak of killing the elephant as a real mark of valour.

The epic Śilappadikāram speaks of the numerous weapons used in war which the late Mr. V. Kanakasabhai translates as follows :

> "In the great forts of Madura, Karūr and Kāñchi many curious engines were mounted on the battlements to shoot arrows or to fling stones on those that besiege them. There were machines like the fishing rod and angle to catch and drag up those that approach the wall : and like iron fingers to seize and tear them to pieces. There were besides furnaces from which hot oil and molten metal might be poured on those that attempt to scale the wall : and iron spokes and spears to shove down those that might succeed in mounting the ramparts."[1]

A song of the poet Āvūr Mūlamkiḻar gives us certain methods of warfare which are surprisingly modern. The method of using barbed wire to protect the army from the attack of the enemy and strategic withdrawals, of which we hear much in modern warring methods, are referred to in this poem.[2] Another poet speaks clearly of lying in ambush to take the enemy unawares.[3]

1. Silappadikāram, XV, 207-17. (See Translation in *Tamil 1800 years ago*)
2. Puram, 301.
3. Ibid, 259.

Neḍunalvāḍai describes the army camp on the battle field. The King's camp was well made and even in camp he slept under his white umbrella and many soldiers slept around him mostly without sword. The camps of ordinary soldiers were generally built with the sugarcane leaves on the side and cut paddy crop on the top with paddy hanging from it. The camp of the ancient Tamil king was large and consisted of many others besides soldiers particularly the porunar and the viraliyar. When there was no fighting the soldiers ate and drank and made themselves merry with the kuravaikūthu. Generals and officers of high rank were accompanied by their wives on the campaign and stayed in the special camps built for the officers. Frequently the king would go round the camp to enquire into the welfare of the soldiers. He did so even in the night and in pouring rain. Such is the description in Neḍunalvāḍai, from which the following lines are quoted in the translation of Mr. J. V. Chelliah:

"The king inspects outside the tent the wounds
Bright swords inflicted on heroic men
Who did the day before in fray cut down
The long trunks thick and huge of elephants
Well-trained in war and decked with frontlets bright
The cold north wind impels the torch's flame
That stands supported on round shapely frames
To slant its trembling tongues much to the south.
A captain armed with a lance whose shaft is strong,
Whose head is bound with blossoms of the neem,
Goes with the king, and points out one by one
The wounded men. Behind a prancing steed
Equipped with little bells and bridles large
And saddled, shakes the raindrops off that fall
In dark and muddy streets. The king's left hand
Holds up his costly robes. The other rests
On the shoulders of a youth of aspect stern.
He walks with a cheerful face, and over him
Is a white umbrella, decked with strings of pearl
That shields him from the rains that noisily falls.
He walks about attended by a few
At dark midnight with no desire to rest.
The king does this when he is in camp
At war with foemen numberless."[1]

1. Nedunalvādai, 194 ff.

The people in the country had a great esteem of the warrior and particularly the hero who dies on the field of battle. It was the wonted custom of the Tamils to cut into twain the body of the hero who died a natural death and this custom was particularly followed in the case of the king, whom the *Brahmanas laid on tharpa* grass and had his body ripped open to make him die a hero's death. Women hurried to the battle field to see if their husbands and sons had died like heroes or had suffered any wound on the back. Suffering a back-wound was considered as highly disreputable and there are instances of kings who died fasting because they had suffered such a wound in battle. It was in this way that the custom of setting up hero-stones to commemorate heroes who died in war arose.

When war was over the king submitted the vanguished to untold misery and humilation. It was the custom of the times for the victorious king to melt the armlet of the vanguished ruler and make of it an anklet, for himself to wear on the leg. The houses of the people of the defeated king were set on fire and their lands were ploughed with asses and sowed with thistles. The Chēra king Śeṅguṭṭuvan is said to have twisted the hair of the women of the place destroyed by him into a rope to be used for dragging his elephant.[1]

1. Patiṟṟuppattu, *V. Pādigam*..

CHAPTER V

The Economic Condition

1. Agriculture

"Though Venus, star of splendour bright,
Strays southward from its wonted course,
Cool showers fail to fall, and the lark
that feeds on rain in silence droops,
Yet sea-like Kaveri mountain-fed
Its waters spread over golden sands.
The never failing fields extend
With green sweet cane and fragrant vats
That boil and make long water plants
Of neighbouring fields grow pale and fade.
Here under stores of grain do sleep
Grown calves fed sleek with yellow rice.
Rich coconut and plantain trees
With bunches, fruitful areca palms,
Sweet mangoes, bunchy palmyras,
And rooty *sempu*, saffron sweet,
And tender ginger ; these abound."

* * * * *

The groves are charming, rich in yield.
Beyond are gardens bright with flowers.
Long ponds are there with lofty banks
That look like the moon when girt with stars
In a cloudless sky. They shimmer bright
With a riot of gaudy tints that tinge
The fragrant flowers that edge the banks,
The ponds afford such joys as felt
In this our birth and in the next.

* * * * *

Where forests were, now hamlets rise.
He deepens tanks, makes rich the land
Expands Urunthai where are seen
High mansions, makes secure its shrines
And people, builds gates small and large,
And places quivers by the side
Of figured mantlets on the walls."[1]

(*Trans., Chelliah.*)

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1. *Pattinappālai, lines.* 1-19 ; 36-43 ; 355-61.

The picture painted for us by the classics of the Śaṅgam age is the picture of prosperity rooted in the fertility of agriculture and expansion of trade. The Maduraikkāñji expressly refers to these two as the main source of the general prosperity of the people during the period.[1] The expression "viḷunīrvēli nāḍu kiḻavōnē" occurring in Puṟanāṉūru depicts agricultural prosperity; the reference like the one in Aiṅkuṟunūṟu "Nerpala poliga pon perithusirakka" in the blessings proferred by the poet to the king indicates the great quantity of agricultural yield, while works like Paṭṭinappālai and Śilappadikāram signify the ceaseless activity of the farmer in those early times.

The importance attached to cultivation is also seen in the interest people showed in cattle rearing. Milk and milk-products like curd, butter, ghee and butter milk are often referred to by the poets of the age. One among them, Kōvurkiḻār, compares the sound produced when ghee is poured into the frying pan to that produced by the falling of rain into a pot, while another, Āvūrmūlamkiḻār, speaks of the generous use of ghee by the people of the times in a line full of meaning: "Nīr nāṉa ney vaḻaṅ-giyum."

Rearing of cattle was so common that one of the signs of war in ancient times consisted in carrying away the cattle of the enemy country. Conversely it was considered among the primary duties of the king to protect the cattle of his kingdom. It was the obvious logic of the people that to take care of the cattle wealth was to increase the wealth of the farmer, which in its own turn increased the wealth of the king. Two lines from Śilappadikāram exemplify this, when they say that the happiness of the people and the prosperity of the very king is due to the cultivator:

"Irappōr śuṟṟamum purappór koṟṟamum
Uḻaviḍai viḻaippôr."

1. Maduraikkanji. 120-121.

The high position which agriculture held in ancient times is mentioned as early as Tolkāppiyam [1] and the later literature of the Śaṅgam age continues the statement. Tirukuṟaḷ assigns a separate chapter to this subject. On the one hand it was considered necessary to cultivate the land and on the other it was held that with diligent cultivation there could be no poverty :

"Ilamenṟu aśayi iruppārai kāṇin
nilamenum nallāḷ ṇagum."[2]

Rice was produced in a large quantity as may be obvious from the reference of the poet, who wishes a long life to his patron, Śelvakaḍuṅgóvāḻiyāthan, by wishing him more years than the sand strewn in the river-bed of the Porunai or the paddy grown in the fields of his kingdom.[3] Harvesting of rice is mentioned often with sugarcane which would imply that sugarcane was cnltivated in as large a quantity as rice.[4] In an ode in Puṟam the joy of harvesting is referred to and the drum that was beaten during the process is particularly mentioned.[5]

Other varieties of grains like varagu, and thinai besides koḷ and avarai (gram and beans) were also cultivated [6] It would appear that of the four varieties of land classified as such from the days of Tolkāppiyam rice and sugarcane were grown in marutham, varagu and thinai in mullai, bamboo, jack-fruit and roots like vaḷḷi (a kind of sweet potato) and a kind of red paddy grew in kuṟiñji, while the people of the neydal bought these from those of the other regions.

The marutham was the most fertile though sometimes the mullai also was as good and the author of Porunaṟāṟṟuppaḍai sings of the peacock straying away foolishly

1. See comment on Tolk. Porul.
2. This couplet. No. 1040, may be translated as "Land laughs in scorn at those who stay quiet pleading poverty"
3. Puram, 387.
4. Puṟam, 32.
5. Ibid. 348.
6. Ibid. 335, Śiru., 164, Malai., 109-10. Madurai, 272 etc.

into the mullai land mistaking it for the marutham.[1] The mango, plantain and the coconut, arecanut, saffron and peper belonged only to the kuṟiñji region and they were grown in plenty during the period.[2]

The poems also describe the general methods of cultivation. Reference is made in Perumpāṉaṟṟuppaḍai to the plough and the wheel (probably in use for drawing water from the well)[3] and the yoking of the oxen. The plough was pressed hard to the ground until the piercing point (koḻu) went deep into the ground. Ploughing straight and crosswise the land was thoroughly made ready for sowing.[4] Ploughing was sometimes done many times to ensure the proper throwing up of the sod ; and a reference in Tirukuṟaḷ gives us an idea as to how well the ploughing was done. In Kuṟaḷ 1037 the author of this work tells us that land was so well ploughed and left to dry that plants would grow even without manure. The process of protecting the seeds from being picked away by the birds of the air and that of clearing the weeds from the ploughed land are also mentioned in our literature.[5]

The prosperity of the ploughman is sketched most strikingly in many classics of the time. Śiṟupāṉāṟṟuppaḍai refers to the generosity of the farmer to anyone who went to see him and the good rice and curry to which all visitors were invited.[6] Poruñaṟṟuppaḍai speaks of the gaiety of the farmer's children and particularly of the ladies of his household;[7] Perumpāṉāṟṟuppaḍai describes the comfortable dwelling of the farmer; and in Puṟam 120 the general prosperity of the farmer is sung. "In the proper season" the poet sings, "the farmer harvests varagu, thinai, and avarai and cooks in new pots, holds a feast on the occasion, all the

1. Porunar., 19 ff.
2. Siṟu, 21, 43-44, Perum., 330-81, Paṭṭina,, 16., Kuṟiñji., 196-88.
3. Perum, 188-89; 198-201.
4. See for example Puram, 120, line 3 (bhumimayaṅga pala vaḻuthu)
5. Perum, 201 ; in Puṟam 120 the term, palliadutal, is used for the process of weeding which was done by a teethed instrument or plank worked through oxen as in ploughing.
6. Śiṟu., 189ff.
7. Porunar., 187.

house partaking of the liquor buried for the purpose for a long time under the ground."

The vegetation in the valleys must have been much more than on the hill side. Sugarcane and paddy were harvested in a large quantity on the plains and the feast with liquor was held in a more grandiose way:

> "If the carts in which the reapers carry their
> liquor get stuck in the mud, they heap up below
> the wheels the stalks of sugarcane. O Lord of
> *this land where flows the river you have lost*
> all sense of shame, for, they say, you are constantly
> playing with your mistress in the flood."[1]

This reference in Agam shows the pining of a wife for her husband who is not with her on such a happy occassion. Porunarruppadai gives us a picture of the harvest itself:

> "The farmers with their sickles bend to reap
> Their harvests pile rice sheafs in immense stacks,
> Heap daily grains threshed out that look like hills,
> And *store it in large bins enclosed in straw.*"
> That stand ranged crose without a space between."[2]

The kings of the period took great care to foster agriculture. It is well-known that Karikala Chola dug tanks for pupose of irrigation and his embankment of the cauvery with workmen from Ceylon is borne out of only from our literary sources but also by the evidence of the Buddhist chronicles of Ceylon. Tanks in existence feeding agriculture is mentioned in several of our poems. In Perumpāṇāṟṟuppaḍai, for example, there is reference to tanks that yielded water when rains failed. In Maduraik-kāṇji *there is mention of* "rivers filling the tanks as they ran towards the eastern ocean"; and Porunarāṟṟuppaḍai speaks of tanks well-bounded and safe.[3]

In ancient times the kings of the Tamil country not only understood the importance of cultivation but were not also allowed to forget it by any chance by their almost

1. Agam, 116 (Trans, by P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar).
2. *Porunar*, 291-95 (Trans. by J. V. Chelliah).
3. Perum, 107-110 Madurai., 245-49; Porunar., 289.

importunate advisers, the poets, A famous poem attributed to Avvai blesses the newly crowned king of the Chōḻa country by first blessing the field bund, for, she said, that in the measure the fieldbund rose in height- water in the field would rise and with it the height of the crop and the prosperity of the King. Numerous are other references in the collections of Sangam works in which the same idea is conveyed;[1] and whenever the prosperity of the king is sought to be conveyed it is the prosperity of the land that is first mentioned. The lines with which the poem Porunarāṟṟuppaḍai ends form the note on which many Śaṇgam poems also end :[2]

> "Each plot enclosed five acres in extent,
> Produces paddy thousand kalams full.
> This is the land that Cauvery well sustains.
> And this realm the king doth own."[3]

2. Industry

But for the Śaṅgam poems one could scarcely suspect the vast industrial activity of the age. They bring before our eyes various kinds of industrial workmen, the goldsmith, the blacksmith, the copper-smith, the conch-cutter, the carpenter, the leather-worker, the potter, the sculptor, the painter and, more than all, the weaver. The twin epics of the period are full of references to these men. Maṇimēkhalai, in particular, mentions the collaboration of architects from Mahārāshtra, blacksmiths from Malwa, carpenters from Greece and Rome and jewellers from Maghada with like workmen of the Tamil country.[4]

The capacity of the Tamil architects is also mentioned in the same work and their workmanship as mentioned in it is high indeed. They produced mechanical wonders like "automatic wells" (though we are not in a position to say as to what they were) and artificial hills, waterfalls and tanks. They built rooms in marble and laid

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1. See for example Puram, 351, 367, 392 etc.
2. See Puram, 67; line, 23, wherein almost the same description occurs.
3. Porunar., last lines (Trans. by J. V, Chelliah).
4. Maṇi., xix, 102 ff.

out wonderful gardens. Nor is it correct to say that they all belong to the realm of poetic imagination, since other literary works of the period besides Manimēkhalai mention specimens of work which are equally wonderful. One has only to read in Śilappadikāram the numerous weapons of offence and defence to which reference is made to understand the mechanical contrivances described in the companion work, Maṇimēkhalai.

The building art reached a very high state of perfection during this time. Carpenters knew their work to a very high level. One has only to remember that boats with the face of the horse, elephant and the lion were made in large numbers and also big ships ;[1]

It was in these boats and ships that the far-flung commerce of the times was conducted, so that it is easy to believe that they must have been well-built and highly seaworthy. The Epic of the Anklet also speaks of moats, drawbridges and underground drainage, which would imply that there were men of trained engineering skill as well. The lighthouse is mentioned beyond doubt in many works of the period like Perumpāṇāṟṟuppaḍai and Śilappadikāram.[2]

The painter's art was commonly practised and in many cases had attained excellent results. Paripādal speaks of the existence of a museum of paintings in Madura, Śilappadikāram refers to picture-houses selling varieties of pictures and Maṇimēkhalai compares the park in Puhār to that of a painted carpet.[3] Instances of this type are many in the poems of the period and we have no doubt that the painter was in great demand. Walls of houses, roofs, dresses, bed-spreads and curtains besides many other articles of everday use were painted. Books on painting were in use [4] and the people of the age had developed an artistic eye to appreciate a good work of art.

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1. Śil., XIII, 176-77.
2. Śil., VI, 141 ; Perum, 349-50.
3. Ibid. XIV, 170ff., Maṇi., III, 165-68.
4. Maṇi., II, 31-33.

Garments with floral designs are frequently mentioned and a great homage is paid to the art of weaving.[1] Dressing material was woven not only from cotton, silk and wool but also from rat's hair[2] and many other sources. Dyers are mentioned along with weavers[3] and the process of colouring yarn was known. The workmanship of the weaver was of a high order and fine fabrics were made. The Roman merchants were surprised at the indescribable fineness of the Indian silk[4] and the Tamil poems compare them to the slough of the snake, the falling cascade and the vapour emanating from boiling milk.[5]

The weaving industry in ancient south India was, however, a domestic industry, in which all the members of the family were interested and took part. There are frequent references to women working at the spinning wheel and Naṟṟinai mentions that women who had lost their husbands (*āḻil pendir*) specially engaged themselves in this work.[6] Still weaving had spread so far and wide in the country that it produced goods for foreign consumption particularly in Rome. Herodotus' mention of Indian cotton as "hair growing on tree better than wool" must make us aware of the rarity of cotton-in early times. South India during this period produced many kinds of cotton and cotton goods both in white and colour. Puṟanāṉuṟu refers to carded cotton of fine variety.[7] There could be therefore little doubt that there was no dearth of clothing material for people in the country and they dressed themselves with decency. The art of washing

1. Puram, 383.
2. Rat's hair cloth is mentioned twice in Śilappadikāram once while describing the bazaar in Puhār (V, 16-17) and the second time in describing the shops in Madura (XIV, 205-07.) The rat referred to here must be different from the ordinary variety. It was apparently larger in size and very hairy (*panmayir pēreli*)-Jivakacintamaṇi 1898.)
3. Śil., V, 17.
4. Rostovtzeff; Social and Eco. Hist. of the Roman Empire, p. 93.
5. "avirthugil puraiyum avvēlaruvi" (Kuṟiñjipāṭṭu).
6. Naṟṟiṉai, 353. The author of Nannūl as late as the XII century compares the poet to the women at the spinning wheel (Śeñcōl pulavanē śēyiḷaiyar)
7. Puram, 125.

clothes was well known and Naṟṟinai refers to the washer-woman applying to clothes starch curdled over night[1]. Besides for making dress cloth was also used for various other purposes like curtains, bedspreads, canopies over beds etc.[2]

The blacksmith, his anvil and bellows are also portrayed in the poems of the age. In place the warrior's one strength is compared to the anvil of the smithy[3] and in another the broad leaves of the lily are compared to his bellows.[4] The leather-worker is mentioned in Puṟam 82, in which reference is made to the leather cot which he sews fast to be of use to his pregnant wife. The potter was a very necessary person and he seems to have been used in religious ceremonies as well. In Naṟṟinai 293 he is represented with a garland of *nocci* flowers round his neck making offering to cows in the assembly hall on the feast day.

The last fact to be noted on the subject is the high standard of general culture to which many of these workmen could lay claim in the days of our study. It is remarkable in the extreme that many of these workmen were poets and philosophers. To give but a few examples, Madurai Perūmkollanār was a blacksmith and poet, Madurai Veṇṇāgaṉar was a goldsmith and poet. There were others like Iḷavēṭṭanar who was a cloth-dealer while being a poet. Ancient system of society was rigidly bound by caste based on occupation or profession and every occupation or profession was handed down from father to son. Men of the different occupations lived in different streets as our sources unmistakably indicate.[5] While this led to progress in various trades and industries it must have also had the effect of making these men skilled in their own jobs. But it is to be said to the glory of our countrymen that they rose above this situation and kept up wider cuḷtural interests.

1. Naṟṟiṇai, 90.
2. Maṇimēkhalai, III, 165-68.
3. Puṟam, 170.
4. Agām, 96.
5. See for example Sil., V. 11 ff.

There is no doubt that the influence of foreign contact had much to do with the excellence attained by the ancient Tamil architects, sculptors, painters and wood-workers crudely called carpenters. Besides the reference in Maṇimēkhalai cited above there are other obvious sources of evidence pointing to this. Literary works like Neḍunalvāḍai, Mullaippāṭṭu, and Patiṟṟuppattu also mention samples of Greek sculpture and other articles of fine workmanship introduced into South India during the period. There is reference in them for example to the beautiful lamp made by the foreigners, the graceful pots and wine jugs of the Romans and so on.[1] Many huge stone images of the Buddha were made at this time in the Tamil country and atleast some of them exhibit clear traces of the Graeco-Roman style.[2] It is now accepted on all hands that there was a temple dedicated to Emperor Augustus on the west coast of our peninsula in the II century A. D. There is no doubt that this must have been built by Roman architects and sculptors. This taken together with the clear traces of Roman influence seen in the sculptures of Amaravati and Ceylon ought to give us an idea of the foreign influence that must have been brought to bear on the various trades of the times in the Tamil country.

There is little doubt that the image of the Pattini-dēvi caused to be made by the order of Ceran Śeṅguṭṭuvan followed the Roman model if not actually done by Roman sculptors themselves. The Indo-Roman connection of the time was, far from being ephemeral, of a permanent character. The trade relations between Rome and India continued for atleast 300 years in full swing during which long period many from the west had settled down on our soil in various capacities. The *yavanas*, as they were called, had special places of residence in all the important cities of South India and they naturally taught men Roman arts and crafts, if not Roman ways of living. The use of

1. See for example Neḍunalvāḍai, 101.
2. See T. A. G. Rao's article on his excavations in the premises of Sri Kāmākshi temple at Conjeevaram (IA., XLIII, 127 ff.)

ivory, for example, was better known and understood by the Romans than by the Indians, since it was primarily as an article of export to western countries that ivory became a thing of value. Ivory was exported, it could be easily imagined, for the manufacture of articles of luxury That in due course the art of making "ivory beauties" became known and practised in our own country is to be seen in the literary works of the period;[1] and here we have an example of foreign influence on our ancient industries and arts.

3. Trade

There may be difference of opinion as to who were the most ancient people of the world, but there is no doubt that the Tamils were among the earliest to travel far and wide in their ships to distant lands as far as China, the Mediterranean and Egypt with their wares of trade and many from these countries also came to south India for trade. The Tamil contact with the Greeks and the Romans is mentioned in numerous places in our literary works.[2] We learn from these sources that horses from the West, foodstuffs from Ceylon and Burma, camphor and perfumery goods from China and South Asia were the chief articles of import, while gold from Kongu, pearl from the Pāndyan sea, sandal from the west coast and pepper from Coorg were the chief articles of trade with south India.[3]

It is surprising that the trans-marine commerce of the Tamils dates atleast as early as 400 B. C., when they had traded with the Chaldeans, with countries like Iran and Iraq and with cities like Babylon and Tyre.[4] We have biblical references to the navy of Tharshish bringing King Solomon gold, silver and ivory, apes and peacock.[5] On the Tamil side, however, though the first reference we

1. See Sil., XIV., 176 and the comment thereon,
2, Sil., V. 11-12 XIV, 66-67, Mani; XIX, 108, Paṭṭinappālai, 29-32, Puram, 56, line 18.
3. Paṭṭina., 185-93.
4. Sayce; Hibbert Lectures, 137.
5. Kings'., IX, 10.

get are from Tolkāppiyam, it makes us understand that by that time commerce across the seas had become an established custom among the Tamils [1] In the IV century B. C. Megasthenes refers to the trade between the Pāṇḍya country and Pātaliputra especially in pearls of which Kautilya distinguishes the variety *Kavātam*,[2] which took its name possibly from its origin on the coast of Kapāṭapura, the ancient capital of the Pāṇḍyas. The classic word for time, 'ōrai' found in Tolkāppiyam is rightly taken to be a variant of Latin 'hora' or hour which itself has a Greek origin. The Graeco-Roman trade with south India must be therefore dated atleast as early as Tolkāppiyam. Strabo says in 25 B. C. that "he saw about 120 ships sailing from Hormus to India".[3] Though this is the earliest documented evidence we have on the volume of this trade there can be no doubt that it had begun to be famous for a long time before for 120 ships to set sail from Hormus at one single time. But Strabo continues and records a Pāṅḍyan embassy to emperor Augustus which met him at Athens in 20 B. C. As early as the I century A. D. we know that a seaman's guide had been composed by an unknown author (probably from among the merchants of Roman Egypt) and it was taken up for further elaboration by Ptolemy in the following century. Surely the experience required to write such a comprehensive manual as he had done must have been gathered over a long period of years and by the work of atleast a few men, who had the keenness to observe.

By the time we come to the period of the later Śaṅgam we find the Tamils thoroughly accustomed to sea-going and the ocean-spirit is writ large in the Tamil literary sources of the period. Puṟam describes the fort of a chieftain standing aloft in the midst of the fields of the marudam as looking like a ship in mid-ocean. Ode. 238 in the same collection compares the utter grief of a person to that of a man sinking into the sea on a rainy night. A song in the

1. Tolkāppiyam, 980.
2. Arthaśāstra (Shama Sastri), p. 83.
3. McCrindle, Anc. India, P. 6.

Kuṟuntogai collection compares the ship sinking in the sea to the setting of the sun behind the hills and the horizon. As we know, Śilappadikāram speaks of ship-builders and Manimēkhalai distinguishes various kinds of sea-going vessels, big and small.

It is astonishing how in such early times as the dawn of the Christian era people in South India ventured so far as Rome and the Meditteranean. And yet this was the fact. It must be even said that the Tamils were among the first to learn the technique of ocean-going traffic, which they perfected from small beginnings. First they built small coasting vessels, which they perfected through various improvements and they proceeded to build bigger and bigger vessels until they built ocean-going ships. Periplus is clear on this point when it mentions three types of vessels, in use in south India in his day, small coasting vessels, large coasting vessels and ocean-going ships, which agrees with thee vidence of the literary works of the Tamils.[1]

The volume of the Indo-Roman trade of the times is to be gauged in other ways also. The value of Indian cloth, precious stones and spices for the ancient Roman seems to have been very great indeed. The picturesque expression of Petronius describing the South Indian cloth of these ancient times as "the web of the woven wind" and the reference of Pliny to the vast annual exodus of money from Rome to India by way of trade, the great praise showered on the sea-green stone of Kāngayam and Pāḍiyur by the Roman writers and the south Indian pepper which is described as "having mitigated the cooking of the western world for more than 2000 years"[2] give one the unmistakable impression of the vastness of this commercial transaction.

Such was the permanent nature of this trade that numerous Roman colonies were set up in South India

1. Compare Periplus in Schoff's translation Sec., 60 with Mani., IV, 29-34 and Paṭṭina., 29-32. Also see Dr. Cornelius, J. I. H., Oct., 1955 for an account of the ship-building industry of the early days.
2. Warmington, *Commerce between the Roman Empire and India* pp. 274 ff.; Arokiaswami, *Kongu Country*, 75; Rostovtzeff, op., cit., loc., cit.

during this period. Not only in the coastal area but even in interior parts like Madura, Karūr, Pērūr, Coimbatore, Pollāchi, Kāngayam, Dhārāpuram and even in places like Kāṇiayāmpūṇḍi in the Avanashi Taluk of Coimbatore district and Kalyamuthur near Palani, comparatively unknown to-day, there were permanent Roman settlements as is evidenced by the finds of Roman coins unearthed from these places.[1]

Nor did the commercial contact thus established remain and end with mere commercial intercourse or merely in learning certain trades and methods of work from the Roman settlers as has been already indicated. The Indo-Roman contact travelled far beyond and seeped directly into the culture of either country.

Periplus mentions the ports of Toṇḍi, Muśiṟi and "Comari to which last came men and women to dedicate their virginity, for it is told that a goddess once dwelt there and bathed." After Comari (Cape Comorin), whose tradition has been so faithfully recorded by Periplus, the good geographer proceeds to "Colchi (identified by scholars with Koṟkai) where the pearl fisheries are." Here again Periplus shows his keen sense of observation :

> "Colchi where the pearl fisheries are; they are worked by condemned criminals and it belongs to the Pāndian kingdom."

He also mentions "Camara, Poduka and Sōpatma (identified respectively with Kōḍikarai, Pondicherry and Nagapatnam) from where large vessels called *Colandia* sailed to the Ganges."[2] The Tamil works of the period, however, mention prominently only the ports of Muśiṟi, Puhār (Kaviripūmpaṭṭinam) and Koṟkai, three great port towns of the three great rulers of the times. Puṟam 343 describes Muśiṟi and its pepper trade in the following way:

> "Pepper bags thrown on the beach and the gold brought ashore the boats ply in the backwaters of Muśiri where the roar of the sea is heard and toddy flows like water."[3]

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1. See Sewell, List of Antiquities, Vol. I. pp. 214 ff.
2. Periplus, 58-60
3. Trans. by P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar.

Śiṟupāṇāṟṟuppaḍai sings the glory of Puhār and Naṟṟiṇai and Agam that of Koṟkai, "where grows pearls of excellent water".[1] Agam 100 describes Puraiyaru as a port with a beautiful beach full of groves of Alexandrian laurel belonging to the chieftain Periyan. Perumpāṇāṟṟuppaḍai refers to yet another port, Nīrpeyyāru not mentioned by the foreign writers.[2]

The export trade of the Tamils during the period was considerable both for its range and money value. Living animals like tiger, leopard, monkeys and peacocks and parrots were exported to Rome and they fetched good price. Ivory, whose use was endless, and pearl, which led to the lament of St. Paul, were exported particularly from Madurai and Uṟaiyūr. Plant products like aromatics and spice, particularly pepper, ginger, cardamon, cloves and nutmegs, coconut, plantain, gingelly oil, jaggery, ebony, rose and teak wood, sandal wood and cotton cloth particularly the variety known as the *argaru* (from Uṟaiyūr) were also among the chief exports. Of mineral products diamonds, particularly from Muŝiṟi and Nelcynda, beryl from Koṅgu, cups hollowed out of precious stones, and steel, more in object form than in ore, completed the picture[3]

The Roman imports were in the shape of coins, coral, wine, lead and tin. The Śaṅgam works give ample evidence of the wine given by the foreign traders and the reference in Puṟam 126, where the huge amount of gold that sailed into the Chēra port is mentioned, is echoed by Tacitus bemoaning the drain of gold from Rome.[4]

Pliny writing about 50 A. D. gives an account of what he heard from the members of a Singhalese embassy to Emperor Claudius (14-54 A.D.) with regard to trade with a people called "the Seres":

1. Siṟu., 116-119 ; Naṟṟ., 23, Agam, 27.
2. Perum., 319-24. Tnis has been identified by scholars with Mahabalipuram on the Madras Coast.
3. See Periplus (Schoff), 41 ff., Pliny, Nat. Hist., VI. 26 ; Warmington, Commerce, 257-51.
4. Puṟam 126, lines 14 ff; Tacitus, Annals, III, 53

> "Ultra montes Hemodos Seras quoque ab ipsis adspici notes etiam commercio, patrem Rachiae commeasse eo, adventis ibi Seras occursare. Ipsos vero excedere hominum magnitudi nem, rutilis comis, caeruleis occulis, oris sono truci nullo commercio linguae. Cetera eadem quae nostri nego iatores fiuminis ulteriore ripa merces positas juxta venalia tolli ab his si placeat permutatio."[1]

Many commentators and writers on this subject found the 'Seres' in Central Asia, Kashgar and N. W. China and some considered them as even mythical.[2] While all these writers had no evidence to go by, it is also impossible to think that the Singhalese could have had trade connections in the I century A. D. with far-off China, Kashgar and Central Asia. On the other hand it seems very reasonable to conclude that the 'Seres' referred to here are none other than the early inhabitants of the Chēra country. This seems to be well borne out not only by the name, 'Seres', so clearly mentioned by Pliny but also by the large trade connections that this region had with Rome and the western world at the time when Pliny was recording his contact with the Singhalese embassy. That the Singhalese of Ceylon had ample trade connections with the Chēras is also on the cards. How well then Pliny concludes his tale when he says after recounting the above account of the embassy, "Cetera eadem quae nostri negotiatores", "The rest of the story (of the embassy) agrees with the reports of our own merchants."

If the identification here proposed is accepted, then Pliny's record gives us a very interesting description of how the early South Indians looked and acted in the course of their business transactions with the foreigners, for Pliny's statement records:

> "Beyond the Emmodi mountains[3] were the Seres whom they (the Singhalese) knew by sight; they traded with them; the father of Rachias[4] had frequently travelled thither and it

1. Pliny, Nat. Hist., VI, 22-24.
2. See Pomponius Mela. III, 7; Lassen, IA., III, 85-86.
3. Possibly the Western Ghats.
4. Possibily a Singhalese chief or treding magnate

was the custom of the Seres to meet strangers there; and these were of unusual height and had red hair and blue eyes and harsh voices; they knew no language employed in commerce. The rest of the story agreed with the reports of our merchants, i.e., they placed their own goods for barter on the farther bank of the stream beside the articles of the natives brought for sale; and, if the natives liked the exchange, they carried off what was offered."

The period referred to in this passage points to the high water-mark of the Indo-Roman trade. It was now that the Emperor Claudius overcame the Arabian domination of the Red sea and facilitated Roman trade with south India. Though this showed a decline towards the end of the I century A. D., it did not end till the close of the fifth, when Alaric the Goth is said to have demanded and received from the Romans 3000 pounds of pepper and 4000 silk robes from south India.[1]

Under such conditions internal trade flourished in the Tamil country in the early centuries of our ēra Śilappadikāram refers to the gay bazaar streets of Puhār while Maduraikkāñji describes in like manner those of the Pāṇḍyan capital.[2] The general volume of trade is noted beautifully in another poem:

> "As when the rainy season comes
> The copious waters drawn by clouds
> Are shed on mountain tops and these
> In turn flow and fill the Sea,
> So goods flow in from sea to land
> And also flow from land to sea."[3]

Goods presented for sale were heaped in the bazaar at places particularly marked for each and each shop was designated by a particular flag very much as inns and taverns are indicated in the West by designs of animal figures. Not only was the trading class a separate entity but it fell into various sub-divisions according to the articles of their trade. Thus the reputed author of Manimēkhalai is known

1. Warmington; op.. cit., 140.
2. Śil., V, 22-23; Madurai., 430 ff.
3. Paṭṭina, 141 ff.

as Kūlavāṇigan Sāthanār (literally, Sathanar, the food-grains merchant). Iḷavēṭṭanar, another poet of the times, is designated as aruvaivāṇigar and many other names with like caste-names are to be found in our early literature.

That the internal trade must have been atleast as brisk as the foreign trade of the times is easily understandable. Trade was not confined to cities only. It went out far beyond the cities and reached the remotest villages. Not only was that necessary for the well-being of the people but it was so for the very growth of trade, since most of the goods needed for sale, particularly the agricultural products, were to be had only from the villages and the countryside. We have numerous references in our poems to groups of traders going with their wares loaded in carts; and since trade of the times was mostly conducted through barter the merchants returned to their places with the wares of the countryside loaded in their carts. The reference in Paṭṭinappālai mentioned earlier bears out this point when it says that curd was exchanged for paddy. These Tamil caravans are referred to in our works as *vandichāttu* and Puram 116 speaks of girls keeping count of these passing carts just for play. Salt was vended mostly in this manner from the coast to the interior.

The merchants of early times earned great wealth in our country and there were many rich merchant families who willingly spent their wealth for the good of the people. Our sources indicate in many places the sense of public service displayed by these merchants, which was aptly recognised by the state which awarded them titles like 'eṭṭi' decorating them with flowers made of gold.[1]

1. See Maṇi., IV, 58; XXII, 111-113.

CHAPTER VI

Society & Religion

I. Social Pictures in The Sangam Works

It is in sketching the social and religious conditions of the times that the classics of the Śaṅgam age are most useful and it is on this that their historical value mainly rests. The poets of the age, like poets of all times, describe best what happens around them and in their pen-pictures we get a delightful view of the life of the people.

In Naṟṟinai 24, for example, we get the description of life in the desert country:

> "The tall wood apple tree has roots, which crack the sail, large boughs and scales (on its bark) like the iguana. When the stalk of its fruits breaks, they fall down and look like balls left by children after play is over on the green grassy plain which looks like a carpet. The people eat the fruit as their principal food."[1]

Elsewhere we have an example of family love and the pangs of parting:

> "He frequently praised my eyes, my shoulders, my cool sweet smelling hair and my forelap covered with beauty spots and was here till yesterday. To-day he is gone, they say, to the treeless desert which stretches vast like the sea and where the deer mistakes the mirage for water. He has gone by himself to the hot desert where the sun stays long and where the wild mango trees grow on the brackish soil and where the *alkali* looks like drops of butter which lie strewn on the pot in which curds are churned."[2]

With such description adorning the pages of the Śaṅgam collections the historian has a full source for studying the social conditions of the period.

1. Naṟṟinai, 24, lines 1-5
2. Ibid, 84

II. Early Tamil Society

The earliest phase of Tamil society as seen in Tolkāppiyam is based on the five-fold classification of land, the hill, the pastoral, the agricultural, the desert and the sea-coast. Different kinds of people were settled on these variously classified lands and by dint of continuous stay in their respective habitat for a long time the people of each region came to have certain fixed customs and ways of life. Hunting and cultivation of wild plants in the mountain region, pastoralism and the rearing of cattle, cultivation of rice and sugarcane, plunder and life by plunder, fishing, diving and sailing became in due course the settled ways of the people of the respective regions.

Tolkāppiyam speaks of this classification in the centuries preceding the Christian era. In the period following it the system had become settled and the Śaṅgam poems clearly distinguish the *pālai* from the *mullai*, the *mullai* from the *neydal* and so on. Kalittogai is a work of the period dealing with these regions *seriatim.*

These societies began when people were few and social classes were unknown.[1] Great unity was therefore seen among the people of each region, who moved freely among themselves and their ruler. The existence of numerous tribes and chieftains seen in the later half of the Śaṅgam age was the result and in some measure the continuance of the polity based on the physiography adumbrated in the early grammer of the Tamils. The intercourse of free love and the rough and ready methods of selecting one's mate so well depicted in the classics of the later Śaṅgam must have also had their beginning in earlier times when for centuries men lived without distinction and moved freely among themselves and the course of love ran on the free path.

It was from such social conditions that a sense of

1. The four Vedic castes of Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra were distinctly of a later day and the only classification Tamil society knew at this time was that of the arivar, uḷavar etc.

larger national unity and of love, honour, and mutual respect and many other high social qualities on which to base national society were extracted. The poets themselves by their continuous going about and varied utterances did no small service in this respect. "They reflect", to use the words of a great western scholar, who has translated some of them into English, "a strong sense of moral obligation, an earnest aspiration after righteousness, a fervent and unselfish charity and generally a loftiness of aim that are very impressive."[1]

Any account of society in the Śaṅgam age cannot blink the fact of the high ideals which ruled Tamil society in those early times. The ideals of a philosopher-poet like Tiruvaḷḷuvar at once catch the eye of the student of the history of the period. His kural[2] which strikes at the basis of differentiation by birth, "பிறப்பொக்கும் எல்லா உயிர்க்கும்" was at the same time a rallying cry to unity. The high principles of conduct he taught by his 1330 couplets could not but have affected the society of the times most effectively. The classic utterance of Kanian Pūṅkunṛan who declared that all places were his and all men his friends, because neither good nor bad could come to one from a source exterior to oneself,[3] the statement of Nakkírar that in essence all men are equal[4] and the statement of Kōvūrkiḻār that wealth and joy follow the wake of justice[5] are examples of the morality which the Śaṅgam poets wished to foster.

They wanted to base happiness on fidelity to one's work and they held to the people the ideal of hard work as the criterion of social happiness. One poet instances in point the tiger, which does not eat the victim that falls to its left but waits for an elephant, which it causes to fall on its right and feasts on it with joy.[6] A society based on such

1. Pope, Nālaḍiyar, Intro., xi
2. Kuṛal, 972
3. Puṛam, 192.
4. Puṛam, 189.
5. Ibid., 31.
6. Puṛam, 190.

principles was bound to have happiness and contentment. The joy of the people is transparent in the poems of the day and it was this that made for the prolific literary activity of the times.

III. Men & Women

Numerous men and women flit across the pages of the poems of this age. Kings, nobles, soldiers, hunters, shepherds, ploughmen and fishermen known by their ancient names of Maḷavar, Kurumbar, Uḷavar and Parathavar are brought before us in the picturesque descriptions of the poets. In Naṟṟiṇai 142 and Agam 94, for example, we get the picture of the shepherd, who goes carrying on his back a palm-leaf mat and round his neck a garland of *mullai* flowers with a stick in his hand and a leather bag on his shoulders, whistling when he wants to gather his sheep. In Puṟam 36 we have the description of young girls at play :

> " Girls who wear anklets filled with pebbles and
> small golden bangles are throwing up and catching
> small balls made of gold (with such merriment) that
> the white sands of the cool Porunai are scattered
> by their play."

The general impression one gets after reading these poems is exactly what has been described above, viz , that the people of the times gave themselves to hard work and enjoyed as a consequence full freedom and contentment.

This freedom was not only given to men but also to women who went about the town freely, played on the seashore and river beds and joined in temple festivals. The following translation from stanza 76 of Kalittogai gives us an idea of the freedom enjoyed by women during this period :

> " Askest thou whether, as my neighbours say, I have
> given my heart to that noble youth, who watches me
> while I bathe in the river, visits me at my house,
> attends on me tenderly, sets right the jewels that
> I wear and paints my shoulders with sandal paste ?
> Listen to what I tell thee. Long have I strayed

with him on the seashore, plucking the stout weeds that grow there, till the tips of my fingers become red, thou sayest : but it was all for a doll which he made with the weeds for me. It is strange that thou art so simple as to believe the tales of my neighbours, who are never happy when they cannot talk scandal. Afraid to meet their curious eye I retraced my steps from my house and he, finding me come back, culled some flowers growing on the marsh and formed them into a garland, and offered it to me. Is it for this trivial mark of attention on his part that thou, without chiding those that sent thee here with false tales, hast come to question me? He did paint on my shoulders beautifully, with sandal paste, the figure of stalk of sugarcane, telling me that I knew not how to paint it. Is it for this little act of courtesy that thou gave ear to the idle gossip of my, playmates and worried thyself."

Men and women mixed freely and knew each other well. The poet of stanza 300 in Kuṟuntogai tells us that women's hair had the natural smell of the kuvaḷai flower and in several stanzas of the same collection we are informed by several poets that wōmen's forehead has the natural smell of the *mullai* flower.[1] Except for nobles and kings men were satisfied with just two pieces of cloth one below the waist and another adorning the head like a turban; while women were apparently satisfied only with a covering below the waist.[2] Ancient Tamils, men, and women, outdid their modern progeny in the use of oil, aromatic scents, coloured powders and paints, while the sandal paste was heavily daubed on their chests. Women had pictures drawn on their bodies in coloured patterns and had their eyelids painted with a black pigment.[3] Both men and women wore ornaments round the neck and on arms and legs. Chiefs and nobles wore particularly heavy armlets and anklets, while women of even

1. Kuṟuntogai, 22, 69, 205, 259, 273,323.
2. Puṟam, 189, Kali., 111, 115. Women of the hill tribes just wore a leafy garment below the waist (Kuṟiñji., 1. 102)
3. Śil., IV, 53 ; VI, 69, VIII, 21 ; Kali., 76.

ordinary status wore numberless jewels, long since forgotten in the very country in which they were once worn.[1] Most women wore jewels made of gold, while those of the poor class had bracelets made of conch-shell and necklaces made of coloured beads.

Bathing and dressing of hair are frequently mentioned in these poems. Śilppadikāram refers to a ceremonial hot bath in water heated with five kinds of seeds, ten kinds of astringents and thirty-two kinds of scented plants, the drying of the hair over the smoke of the *akhil* and the parting of it into five parts for dressing.[2] This custom of dressing the hair in five parts is an essentially Tamil custom described in Kalittogai.[3] It has since had its migration into neighbouring countries like Burma, Malaya, Indo-China and China. Men also grew long hair (a custom still prevalent) and wore the tuft tied together with a knot that was sometimes surrounded by a string of beads.[4]

IV. Family Life

Family life is extolled in the Śaṅgam works as the best kind of life in the world. Contrasting it with celibacy and priesthood the Kural unhesitatingly marks it out as the better of the two because " the house holder is the mainstay of the ascetics, the needy and the departed."[5] In the last couplet bearing on family life the author concludes most beautifully when he says.

> " He who lives the true life of the householder
> On earth becomes one among the gods in heaven."

The spirit of true family life was properly understood by the men of early times, A poet in Aiṅkuṟunūṟu describes the beauty of the husbandman sitting in his cot on an evening with his wife and child as being sweeter than even the yāl played by the pāṇar[7] The theory of rebirth

1. Śee Sil., VI, 80 ff.
2. Śil., VI, 76-81.
3. Stanzas, 32, 55.
4. Puṟam, 150.
5. Kuṟal, 42 (Dikshitar's transln.)
6. Ibid, 50 („ „)
7. Aiṅkuṟunūṟu, 410. The song of Pāṇḍyan Arivuḍainambi in Puṟam 188 is a classical exposition of the joy of children to parents.

and of seven re-births was commonly believed during this period and Kuruntogai fastens on these a third conception that husband and wife remain so through all the seven births.[1] The same author gives us an example of wifely fidelity; the wife is not expected to love the husband after evaluating his qualities (for it is not possible for her to estimate them) but because of the fact of his being her husband.[2] That the wife must always look up to her husband for guidance is again borne out in the same work by the comparison of the neruñji flower, which always looks up to the sun.[3]

Strange as it is, it is of the essence of Tamil conception of family life that if true love ought to subsist between husband and wife it must have had its beginning with love at first sight. This idea of love at first sight is developed to extreme fineness in the Tamil anthologies of the period. This was described as *kāmam* by our ancients as distinct from other kinds of love and it was considered as the *agam* (literally the 'inside' of every thing) and whatever was extraneous to it was the *puram* or the 'outside.' Thus even war, wealth, external glory and even government were considered as the extraneous things of life. Marital love alone was to them the essence or the 'inside' of life.

Again the Tamil poets of the period describe the qualities of true love as one that continually grows, always finding something new in the lover, so that it never wanes under any circumstance. Neither passage of time nor the absence of the beloved nor calumny can take away an iota from true love and it grows with "time bigger than the world. vaster than the skies and deeper than the sea."

Our ancients favoured marriages reared up on such foundations and were not against wooing or even elopements, provided such elopements were followed by conventional marriage. The maiden companion of the lady in love

1. Kuṛuntogai, 2, 49, 57.
2. Ibid., 366.
3. Ibid., 315.

and the man companion of the man in love are brought into the works of these poets most prominently and their advice is often sought and followed by the parties in love. In Kuruntogai 321 is a description of a hill chief in love and the advice of the maid to the lady in love is given in the following manner.

> " The hill chief whose breast is daubed with sweet sandal paste, from whose neck hangs a garland of flowers, whose hair is decorated with the water lily longs for your embrace. The red eyed terrible tiger stalks the frightened elk (i.e., the neighbours try to expose your love intrigues). Hence this is no time for secrecy. Therefore, simple maiden, open the door (and let everyone know)."[1]

The leaf of the *aśōku* tree is spoken of in these works as the symbol of wooing and the white lily as the symbol of love.[2] Elopement occurred when the parents were not agreeable for the marriage and the custom of *madalēruthal* was resorted to by the unrequitted lover.[3]

Peaceful family life was often intruded upon by the harlots, who were many. They figure so prominently in the poems of the day and enjoy such a social standing that there could be no doubt that the harlots of those times were not the degraded prostitutes of the modern day. They gave their companions more o a cultural enjoyment than anything else. Yet we find in Kuruntogai, 80 harlots challenging wives and their relations. They frequently went to festivals to seduce men and we find in Naṟṟinai 170 the maiden companion addressing a warning to the wife to rise and protect "our dear one from seductions." In the same work there is a reference to the women of the whole town guarding their husbands from the harlots.[4] In another poem it is said that the noise caused by the battle of Talayālaṅkānam was surpassed by the

1. Kuruntogai, 321 (P. T. Srinivasa Aiyengar's Transln.)
2. Ibid., 214, 321.
3. Madalēruthal, a custom by which the unrequitted lover rides on a horse figure covered by palm leaves carrying the pictures of himself and his lady love.
4. Naṟṟiṇai, 320.

uproar created when the errant husband played in the freshes with a harlot.[1] The apparent discrepancy must be explained by the fact that in the way in which the poets describe the hetaira it is not possible to distinguish the two varieties of them, the good and the bad. There were women who gave their lovers intellectual companionship and others who were of the sordid variety, what we may distinguish as the courtesan and the harlot. Both the kinds existed during the period and if the above poems give us examples of the latter variety, Manimēkhalai, the heroine of the epic going by her name, gives us a classical example of the former. Singers known as the *panar* whose profession was going from place to place amusing the people and particularly the chiefs and the rulers of the country seem to have performed the office of the intermediary between the wife and the husband, the harlot and the lover. In Naṟṟinai 380, the anxious wife is seen requesting a bard to take away her husband from the street of harlots and in Kurutogai, 33 is depicted the astonishment of a damsel at the volubility of the bard.

V. Personal Comforts

People lived in two varieties of houses-those built of mud and the others built of brick (described in our literature as *suduman*, literarily burnt mud). The poor lived in thatched houses covered with grass or the leaves of the coconut or the palmyra. Windows were generally small and made like the deer's eye. Paṭṭinappālai refers to the houses of the well-to-do as having porticos and piazzas and open terraces on the top.[2] Manimēkhalai, Silappadikāram, Perumpānārruppadai, Maduraikkāñji and Neḍunalvāḍai speak of well-built storeyed houses, the dwelling of the rich, which had *gopurams* for the entrance, metal plates for the roofs and iron gates covered with red paint to prevent rusting. These houses were lighted with

1. Agām, 116
2. Paṭṭinappālai, lines 140ff.

beautiful artistic lamps often from Greece and Rome. They burned with oil extracted from fish.[1]

The food of the times was very plain and it consisted of rice, milk. butter, ghee and honey. Meat and liquor were freely used.[2] Curd was in common use and the poet refers to the custom of bartering curd for paddy in equal quantity in Puṛam 33. Spicing of curry and rice is also frequently referred to.[3] The custom of mixing palmyra juice with sugarcane juice and coconut water is mentioned as common in the *neydal* region.[4] Kuruntogai furnishes examples of various sweets that were made with curd, jaggery, puffed rice, milk and ghee.[5] The habit of eating puffed rice with milk, which is even now in vogue, is mentioned in Kuruntogai, 256. The use of tamarind soup with aromatics akin to the pepper water of modern times is also mentioned, though only with the pastoral people.[6]

The custom of feeding guests was common custom and eating without a guest to partake of the food was considered unsatisfying. The cawing of the crow was considered as an omen of the coming guest, who was eagerly awaited. Kuruntogai tells us that the crow was considered as a good harbinger and it mentions the custom of feeding this bird with white rice and ghee. Poets frequently mention the crow in this capacity and the poetess who praised it for this service is known in the pages of our literature as "Nacheḷḷāiyar who sang on the crow (Kākkaipādiniyār Nacheḷlaiyār). Poets and the learned were always considered as honoured guests and red rice fried in ghee was given to them as a mark of love and respect and poets were specially treated to rice and ragi boiled in milk and honey with a roasted rabbit as a side dish. Feeding and feeding of

1. Sil., II, 12-13, V, 147, 149; Maṇi., XIX, 3, Madurai., 451, Peṛum. 346—48, 406, Neḍunal., 79—88, Paṭṭ., 40.
2. Liquor and meat are frequently mentioned in these poems (Puram, 33, 56, Paṭṭina., 108 etc.)
3. Puṛam, 127, 160 etc.
4. Puṛam, 24.
5. Kuṛuntogai (Swaminatha Iyer's Edn.,) Introdn.
6. Ibid., 167.

guests thus went on every day both morning and evening.[1] When the husband had parted from his wife and gone away on business it was the custom among the Tamils to feed guests with particular interest both to forget his absence and to expedite his return.[2]

There were numerous amusements and plays in which people took part. Dances, musical entertainments, religious festivals, bull-fights and cock fights' single combats and many other virile games were the order of the day, while women amused themselves with religious dances like the *kuravai* and the *ammānai* and playing the dice, *thāyam* or *kaḻanku* and the *varippanthu* or cloth ball. Playing in swings made of palmyra fibers was another game particularly indulged in by girls.[3] Naṟṟinai speaks of another game of dice called *pandil*, which boys played after the school hours and of a marble play with the nelli fruit as marble.[4] Puṟam, 33,176 and Naṟṟiṇai, 155 refer to two games, *ōrai* and *alliyam*, games played with decorated doll.[5]

Kuruntogai speaks of children playing with toy-cart.[6] Building of sand houses on the sea-shore was a common play among children and is referred to in many poems.[7] The poets make us understand that such plays were enjoyed on the sea-shore even when children were fairly advanced in age in the most natural manner and that not infrequently boys and girls got into the mood of marital love on the sea-shore where they played.[8]

A further incentive was offered in this direction by the custom of bathing in sea and river without distinction of sex as observed to-day. This was a distinguishing feature of the social life of the Śaṅgam times and that was in unison with the spirit of the age. Still greater opportunity was

1. Puram, 34.
2. U. V. Swaminatha Iyer, Śaṅgathamil, 80.
3. Naṟṟiṇai, 90.
4. Ibid, 3.
5. It would appear that in ōrai a single doll was used, while in alliyam two dolls were used.
6. See also Perumpāṇāṟṟuppadai, 248—49.
7. Agam, 110, Kuruntogai, 326.
8. Ibid.

offered for the meeting of boys and girls during the numerous feasts and festivals that marked the social and religious life of the period. The feast of Indra, which was an annual feature was celebrated for 25 days in the Chōḷa capital. It furnishes the background for the events narrated in Silappadikāram.[1] In Paṭṭinappālai reference is made to the feast of god Muruga.[2] In Silappadikāram itself reference is made to another feast—that of the god of love or Kāma.[3] In the country side the rural folk kept even a greater number of festivals in honour of minor gods like Koṟṟavai and the dance called Vēṭṭuvavari was performed in her honour.[4] There was a feast in honour of the sea that gave them so much wealth and Puṟam, 9 refers to its foundation by one of the great early Pāṇḍyas—Palyāgasālai Muthukuḍumi Peruvaḷuthi—mentioned in this poem as Munnirviḷavin Nediyōn.

Several poems in the Śaṇgam collection refer to the vast and beautiful playgrounds that existed during the period. A song in Kuṟuntogai collection sings of the greatness of the port of Toṇḍi on the western cost :

> " Oṇthodimagaḷir vaṇḍal ayarum
> Thondianna en nalam thanthu "[5]

A Song in Naṟṟinai addresses itself to the herons in the following manner :

> " Friend may thou live long. Tell me, flocks of herons, what illness had made you give up your games after preying on the salt marshes ?"

and the poem narrates their several pranks.[6]

Dances and musical entertainments were very common and one would almost think that there is no end to the varieties of dances mentioned in our poems. Silappadikāram alone refers to no less then eleven kinds of

1. Cantos, V and VI.
2. Paṭṭinappālai, 142-58.
3. Canto, XIV, 110-11.
4. Oanto, XII (Vēṭṭuvavari)
5. Kuṟuntogai, 238, lines, 3-4.
6. Naṟṟiṇai, 123.

dances, which are divided into seven groups.[1] Learning to dance was considered then as a necessary concomitant of a well-brought-up lady and even the king did consider it fit to preside over dance performances in the most ceremonial manner. The epic gives such minute details about music that it may well be said that music had already become a science in the Śaṅgam times. It further refers to the make of musical instruments and shops where they were sold in its description of both Puhār and Madurai. There is no doubt that dancing and music were greatly appreciated during this period. Along with singing and dancing came the art of dramatising. Though of the actual themes of the dramas we are not aware, we will not be far wrong if we surmise that they were mostly religious in character. Sometimes dramas were also enacted to commemorate great events or persons.[2]

Bardism and the system of wandering minstrels going from place to place, with their musical instruments singing the glory of either a person or a great event enjoyed great currency during the period and it must be noted that Tamiḷakam was not singular in this respect. What happened here in the early centuries of the Christian êra was repeated elsewhere in western countries, particularly in Ireland a little later to continue with full force almost throughout the Middle Ages. Such men became the true educators of the people both in the east and in the west and continued so for many countries.[4]

In the Tamil country ; however, the bard began as an individual to whip up the martial spirit of the soldiers engaged in war and to sing of their victory when the battle was won. Such was also the origin of the *porunar* and his partner, the *virali*. They were thus a respected lot as will be evident from the large gifts with which kings never failed to honour them. The golden flower was often given to them

1. Śil., III, The whole of this canto is devoted to dance, the science and the art of it.
2. Ibid., 10—11.
3. U. V. Swaminatha Iyer, op., cit., 49.
4. In Greece the wandering minstrel indeed preceded Homeric poetry.

as a common gift as the *viraliyar* obtained the gift of jewels strung on a siver string and they were freely offered drinks and fed sumptuously.[1] The porunar's ability to describe was marvellous and kings took them to the battle-field and used them not only to encourage the soldiers but also to carry messages from the battle field to people at home.

Besides the porunar were the *panār* and their companions, the *kutheyar*, who performed to the common people and interested them in their rounds. A song in Puṛam makes us understand that even the pānar were well rewarded for the entertainment they gave to the people. They were so well-to-do as to themselves reward minstrels, who wandered into their places. An ode in the Śaṅgam collections sings the praise of the pāṇar in the following manner.

> " The modest homes of the pānar whose hands are full of gifts is near the wide city..............If thither you softly advance you shall prosper well. His gifts are not mere chance like gold found by the woodman in the forest. Hesitate not ; long may he flourish ".[2]

Then were the acrobats known as āriyakūttar, which would perhaps show that their art was imported from the north. Their rope dance to the accompaniment of the drum is mentioned in Śilappadikāram.[3]

These filled the picture of the amusements of the people. A people with varied amusements are generally people who work hard. Paradoxical as this may seem, it is difficult to think of enjoyment where there is no employment. The ancient Tamils worked hard and Mullaippāttu collection gives us the idea that they did their work according to a time schedule, more understood than expressed but none the less real. Agam speaks of Nāḷigai-vaṭṭil, a device akin to the hour-glass of the Greeks and the Romans, from which they calculated time and Nāḷigai-kaṅakkar or time-keepers were engaged by kings to announce to them the passage of time. As has been

1. Puṛam, 11, 12, 29, 69, etc., Porunar., lines 155ff.
2. Puram, 70 (Pope's Transln.)
3. Sil., III, 12—25.

already said, people in the countryside knew the hour of the day and even the changing seasons by changes in the floral world.[1] They dressed themselves clean[2] and sped from place to place on their errand tirelessly by foot, though the well-to-do had recourse to carriages and chariots drawn by horses.[3]

VI. Religion

The religious position of the Tamils during the period of the three Śaṅgams is too vast to be controlled in a short study like this. Much less is it possible to establish any philosophical synthesis among the various religions of the times or even in any one of the systems that existed during the period. So great is the panorama of religious deities thrown on the canvas by our literary evidence and such is the variety that it is also difficult to assess their historical growth ; neither age nor the element of growth seems to set a bound to their development.

In Śilappadikāram alone are mentioned a variety of deities beginning from those of natural religion and god Indra of the most ancient Vēdas to Śiva and Vishnu who appear together with the deities of the minor variety like the guardian deities of Madura and Puhār and the "Bhuṯta at the cross-roads" in the latter place.[4] In a single work like Paṭṭinappālai consisting of 300 lines worship of Muruga is mentioned along with the worship of dead heroes, the sea-god symbolised by the shark's horn and the pillar god Kanthu,[5] "which stands alone without form and without attachment". At the same time Paripādal, a work of the same age, though a little later in point of time, mentions the entire Vēdic pantheon, the 12 adityas, 8 vasus, 11 rudras and the twin asvini-devas.

1. For details see later.
2. The dhoby and the dhoby woman using kañji for cleaning clothes is mentioned in *Agam*, *378*, and *Kurun*, *330*.
3. Perunkathai, though a later work, speaks of artistically built carriages which looked like the lotus etc.
4. Sil., V, 64ff., VI, 16-17, X, 11-14, XIV, 181, XXV, 98, XXIII, 177-78 Etc.
5. Tolkappiyam describes kanthu as kanthaḷi. Some commentators opine that this symbolises the sun. Naccinarkiniyar, however, gives it a high conception, "the principle beyond all manifested ones".

As with the deities so with the cults. The vedic and the pre-Vedic, the Buddhist and the Jain philosophies were as current in this period as the later *bhakti* cult of Śiva and Vishnu of which we see here the beginnings.[1]

Some writers argue that for centuries before the Christian êra the Tamil country had little contact with the religious state of upper India and that Brahmans who brought the Vedic religion into the south came only in the first centuries A. D. Even the late Mr. V. Kanakasabhai opines in the same direction.[2] Mr. Pillai thinks that though they settled down in the south as early as the advent of Agastya they neither came in large numbers nor did they mingle with the population, always choosing to reside separately. 'To the other castes they posed as ' heaven compellers ". They were engaged as teachers occasionally. Some of them were Tamil poets. Frequently they started on pilgrimage, when they went round the Pothiya hill, bathed in the sea at Cape Comorin and at the mouth of the Kāvēri and travelled to the banks of the Ganges."[3]

But the whole range of Śaṅgam literature shows such a familiarity with them that this view does not seem to be wholly correct. The " triple sacred fire ", the " twice-born nature ". " the six duties ", ideas associated with the Brahmans-are often mentioned in the works of the period.[4] Even Tolkāppiyam refers to the six Brahmanic duties and the old king Muthukudumi Peruvaḷudi, supposed to have ruled in days prior to the deluge and the disappearance of the Pahruḷi river, is associated with Vedic yagas and called on that account Palyāgaśālaimuthukudumi-peruvaḷudi. Of another, Rājaśuyamvētta Perunarkiḻḻi it is said that " pouring fully into the wet hands of begging Brahmanas (he gave) flower and gold along with water ".[5] Karikāla's yajnas are mentioned in Puram 224. So well accustomed are the poets of the day with the Brahmanical

1. Sil., X, 11-14, 15-25, 44-45, 64-65, 142-147 ; Mani., XXI, 90ff.
2. Tamils 1800 Years ago, 55-56.
3. Ibid., 56.
4. Sil., XVIII, 70, XIII, 67-66, XXV, 127-28.
5. Puram, 367.

rites and ceremonies that the Pāṇḍyan king is described as "having many sacrificial halls."[1] Śiva is referred to as reciting the Vēdas[2] and the three great Tamil kings are compared to "the triple fire of the twice-born".[3] The Patiṟṟuppattu, on the other hand makes a direct reference when it sings of the Chēra Kings:

> "Following the ways of the virtuous Brahmanas whose duties are six, learning, teaching, offering sacrifices, assisting others to offer sacrifice, taking and making gifts".[4]

It was Buddhism and Jainism that entered the Tamil country in the first centuries of the Christian êra. Tolkāppiyam knows little or nothing of these highly philosophical religions.[5] But the classics of the Śaṅgam are full of references to them. The view that the two great epics of the period, Śilappadikāram was Jain and Manimēkhalai was Buddhistic is highly corroborative. Both on account of their authors and the views expressed in them there seems to be much truth in this statement. This can be effectively proved by plucking out from these great works their respective Jain and Buddhist parts. One would then find that their beating heart has gone away with them. Many theṟe are who would describe the author of the immortal Kural as a Jain. Though it is not possible to establish this beyond dispute, there is no doubt that much of the high philosophy and morals that ring through the Śaṅgam poems have been taken from these so-called heterodox religious works and works on morals like Tirukadugam and Nālaḍi, though slightly later in point of time, are entirely Jain inspired.

The philosophy of materialism that filled the people of early times is seen to give way before the other-worldliness of the new teaching, which placed knowledge before matter. The Buddhists and Jains called on men to look to the world beyond matter and thus was born the Sānkhya

1. Puram, 15
2. Agam, 181
3. Puram, 367
4. Patiṟṟu., 24
5. The mention of kānchithinai which refers to the utter mutability of earthly glory (vāgai) may not be due to the influence of these religions.

philosophy. The doctrine of the Vaisēshikas was a natural development and it held the view that man was free from suffering only when he transcends the material and gives up desire That suffering is the result of desire became the central doctrine of Buddhism. Duty for duty's sake became the watchword of the philosophers of Mimāmsa school, which was a natural off-shoot of the philosophy of the annihilation of desire. Thus all the six systems of philosophy known to us to-day were known to the early Tamils,[1] and though Hinduism was no stranger to them it was through the two new religions that they were amplified and perfected. It is not too much to say that Buddhism and Jainism gave a philosophical basis to the religious feelings of the times. Men were happy to accept it. The poems in Puranānūru collection alone give ample evidence of the permeation of the new philosophy into the popular mind. Very often these poems give precedence to dharma or justice. In puṟam, 28 the poet who blesses the Cola king Nalaṅkiḻḻi wishes that justice may form part of his wealth:

> " அறனும் பொருளும் இன்பமும் மூன்றும்
> ஆற்றும் பெரும நின் செல்வம் "

In Puram, 358 the killing of desire is unmistakably advocated in the last two lines:

> " விட்டோரை விடா அள் திருவே
> விடாதோர் இவள் விடப்பட்டோரே "

which mean that Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity, would never leave those who have left desire and those who have not left desire are those who have been left by her. Swāmi Vipulānanda in an article contributed to the Tamil Culture brings out the influence of Buddhism and Jainism on the Tamils of this period beautifully thus:

> " The disciplined life of the monk and the self-sacrifice shown by him may have appealed to the hardy Tamil warrior. The old soldier, who might have grown world-weary of the endless number of battles he was called upon to fight, may have found a calm refuge in the seclusion of monasteries. Those who suffered great bereavements such as the fathers of Kōvalan and

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1. The epic Manimekhalai mentions the six systems by name, (XXVII, 78ff)

Kannagi entered the monasteries to pass the last days of their lives. Princes of the royal blood, such as Ilanko-adikal, embraced a life of poverty to follow the example of the noble ascetic, the scion of the Sākya clan".[1]

Śaivism and Vaishnavism were also well-known religions during the period. Siva as a deity is not mentioned by name in the Eṭṭuthokai or the two epics; but he is certainly mentioned by his attributes, "the ancient first Lord" (முது முதல்வன்)", the Lord with the blue beautiful throat "(நீலமணி மிடற்று அண்ணல்)" the god under the banyan tree" (ஆலமர் செல்வன்). The term Śaivism makes its appearance only in Manimekhalai.[2] In early times both Saivism and Vaishnavism seem to have existed in the Tamil country only in principle and not by name. When Tolkāppiyam settles the deities of the different regions as god Muruga reigning over the hills and Māyōn over the forests, it is speaking most certainly about Śiva (whose son is Muruga) and Vishnu (whose earlier name was Māyōn) but there is no cut and dried system of Śaivism and Vaishnavism in it. From the small beginnings of the worship of Muruga and Māyōn in the early centuries B C. to Śaivism and Vaishnavism of later times it is a long cry indeed and it is a correct estimate to say, judging from the evidence of our literature, that the two great religions of south India were not born full clad but represent the slow growth of a perceiving mind through centuries of practice. Śaivism began most naturally under the banyan tree (ஆலமர் செல்வன்) before it went over into its huge temples. Already in the period of the third Śaṅgam we find Śaivite rituals taking precedence in Śilappadikāram, Manimēkhalai and Maduraikkāñji [3]. Kodukotti is mentioned as a dance of Śiva and Kūthaśākkiyan, a dancer in the Chēra country, is said to have exhibited it before king Śenguṭṭuvan. The offerings from the Śiva temple at Ādagamādam are also mentioned specifically.[4] That Vaishnavism had made equal strides in these early

1. Tamil Culture, V, i i i, 257.
2. Mani., XXVIII, 87.
3. Sil., V, 169ff; XIV, 7-10, Mani., I, 54-55; Madurai., 453-55
4. Sil., XPVIII, 67-75; XXVI, 61-63.

days is also seen from works like Perumpāṇāṟṟuppadi and Śilappadikāram in which the "god sleeping on the serpent couch in his eternal wakeful sleep" is mentioned.[1] Still between their beginnings and their settled formation quite a long time elapsed and the period of the Śaṅgam must be taken as the period of transition.

The very atmosphere of the period of the Tamil academies was unsuited for the definitive formation of any one faith, though the incipient doctrines of all the well-known religions of South India were known to the people of the age. They were men who lived in a spirit of war and freedom broadly typified in the dichotomy of the Puram and Agam, within which their lives moved and under which all their numerous poems can be classified. One of their ancient kings, Mākīrti, in whose court Tolkāppiyam was publicly released, it is said, considered himself as greater than the gods, whom he looked down upon as "quarrelsome children" and he interfered and settled a dispute between the devas and the asuras.[2] Another Pāṇḍya is said to have prayed to the sea-god for a river to fertilise his kingdom and thus the Pahruḷi was made.[3] A third king in the same dynasty is seen challenging the same sea-god by throwing his lance at the sea and is not daunted even when a great part of his kingdom is washed away by the angered ocean.[4] On the other hand, the people of the times knew much more than we can imagine.[5] They knew not only Śiva and Vishnu, the destroyer and the protector, but also Brahma, the creator and a poet reviewing the everyday occurrences of joy and sorrow questions the justice of Brahma's action.

Their sense of freedom seems to have developed questioning spirit and many of them kept on to their own primitive ways of worship. The worship of the moon, the sun and the rain was very common and kept its hold on the

1. Perum., 371-73; Sil., XI, 35ff.
2. See Iraiyanar Ahaporul, Sutra, 35, and the commentary
3. Puram, 9; Sil., XI, 17.
4. Sil., XI, 18ff.
5. Puram, 194, line, 5.

people even to the days of the epics.[1] The worship of Korravai, the goddess of victory, is sung in a whole canto in Śilappadikāram.[2] The god of love, Kāman, was another deity, that had collected round itself numerous group of votaries during the period. Young unmarried girls were considered his army, the cool breeze of the south, his chariot and the dark grove, his armoury.[3] A great annual festival was held in his honour all over the Tamil country at which young girls prayed to him for conjugal happiness.

There were others who relied on the "bhūta of the cross-roads" which punished the unjust by beating their life out of them. Some others relied on their dance-the kuravai-for rain, for the cows to yield more milk and for the curing of diseases. Yet others set great store by omens seen in the direction of bird flights, when embarking on some venture. Many believed in demons going round their place and having their station on trees, battle fields and burning ghats "drinking blood and combing their hair with hands soaked in blood".[4]

Tanks and ponds were considered by some as invested with miraculous properties and the conception of the guardian deities of Madura and Puhār gave courage to the people of these cities.

In this way religious formation was often stranded and delayed, though our own sources do not fail to indicate the manner in which the new development was making its way. Thus in Vēttuvavari of Śilappadikāram we find Korravai described as the consort of Śiva and incarnation of Lakshmi; she is even depicted with the sūla of Muruga in her hand.[5] A long poem in Puram sings the praise of a brahman preacher, Vinnandāyan of Puñjanur[6] in Sōnādu

1. Sil., I, Iff. See also Puram, 35, 60; Agam, 253, Madurai., 454 etc.
2. Sil., XII.
3. Ibid., VII, 6ff.
4. Sil., V, 134, IX, 45-51, 59-60, Puram, 204, 238, 259, 359; Kurun., 263 etc.
5. Ibid., XII, 54-57, 60.
6. Puram, 166.

and describes him as "the champion of Śaivite doctrine against the onslaughts of sophistic religionists, which would also point to this process on the move.

The method of worship generally consisted in dancing and offering flowers, rice and meat to the gods often set up under trees. There is no doubt that images of gods were made and the discovery of the lingam dating to the centuries B.C. at Gudimalam by Mr. T. A. Gopinatha Rao[1] only substantiates this view. Further, the epic Silappadikāram clearly refers to the practice of making stone images (கடவுள் எழுதுவோர் கல்).[2] There is no doubt that temples built of brick were also in existence. Temples dedicated to Siva, Muruga, Baladeva, Vishnu, the god Kaman (Kāmavēl) and the moon god are clearly mentioned in our sources and Manimēkhali tells us that a temple called Sakravāḷakōttam was built "big as the hill all in brick."[3]

1. Gopinatha Rao; Elements of Hindu Icnography, II; ·i (see also plates ii-v)
2. Sil., XPV, 130.
3. Ibid., V, 101-73; IX, 60; VI, 58-59.

CHAPTER VII

The Cultural Background

I. Its Characteristics

It seems apposite to lay down here certain general conclusions about the cultural background of the people whose history and life we have described in the foregoing pages. On the one side is the view, largely supported, that the age of the Śaṅgam was a period in which culture reached its high water-mark. On the other, there is a small school of opinion which decries the cultural soundness of the people who lived during this period and the main argument is drawn from the undue importance attached to sexual life by the poets of the age.

In the first place it must be remembered that sex-life as is portrayed by the poets of the times arose naturally out of the circumstances and the surroundings in which they were placed and even more from the sense of utter freedom with which they sang. On the other hand, the great importance they attached to morals and unblemished family life ought to more than counterbalance the impression they may otherwise leave on us. The immortal Tiruvaḻḻuvar clearly enjoined on the householder not merely love but also rectitude[1] and the twin epics which arose during the period, the Śilappadikāram and Manimēkhalai, were the elaboration of this very ideal. They show the dire consequences of irregular family life in the most graphic manner. In the person of Manimēkhalai, whose glory as a Buddhist ascetic is sung in the epic that bears her name, it is the reaction of a people rather than of a single individual to the life of an errant husband that is portrayed. Avvai, who may be called the *doyen* of the poesy of the times, brings this out beautifully when she sings that whether the land is fertile or dry, high or low, what really matters is the good life of its people.[2]

1. Kural, 45.
2. Puram, 187.

It is true that far too many poems of the period depict sex-love and the impression they leave on the mind of the reader is of a people wholly given up to the passion of sex. That this was not however so is evident from the numerous avocations in which we find them engaged. While men took to trading, learning and cultvating of the soil besides fighting for the king, women took to singing, dancing and painting. In the war-laden atmosphere of the times men had many more important occupations to attend to than revelry and sexual enjoyment.

The spirit of ceaseless endeavour was awake and apparent and men strove every nerve to attain the object of their desire. Not even the poets whom we find going from place to place, were without a particular work to which they were attached. Thus the poet Nedunkaṇṇanār is described as a military officer and is known as Ênāthi-Nedunkaṇṇanār; another is a doctor and is known as Maruthuvan Dāmodaranār; a third is a grocer, Kūlavāṇigan Śāthanār and so on. Work was the order of the day and even the fisherfolk are said to practise wrestling in their spare time.

Further, women were considered sacred and could not be attacked or treated lightly. The very poems which describe the *agam* state of mind often also speak to us of the resolve of women against light-hearted men, adulterers and men with weak mind. Love was indulged in only when the parties were satisfied with each other and where such love is born we find the woman pining for her lord particularly in his absence and vice versa.

There could be no two opinions on the point that when considered in this manner it is in the poems of this period that the qualities of true love are best depicted and that is the greatness of these poems. To us moderns the depiction itself may appear plain and outspoken but they were written primarily for the men of their own day, who knew not prudery and it is wrong for us to put upon their diction a construction which the poets never intended.

The happiness of married life is often seen in these poems. *Sati* often followed the death of the husband. In Puram 246 we find the classic utterance of the queen of Bhūtapāṇḍyan, who considers the fire, that was going to devour her along with her husband's dead body, as cool "as a tank made beautiful with lotus flowers". We are told that women grew weak during the absence of their husbands and kept feeding the needy praying for their quick return.

On the other hand, such valour as is depicted in these poems makes us wonder. We have only to remember the statements of heroic women found in these poems to understand of what mettle the people of the Śaṅgam age were made of.[1] Kings swore vengeance when they were compelled to take up arms by evil minded kings. Here in a poem the poet Kallādanār speaks to the king thus: "Not until you had seen the wives of the foe cut off their hair as a symbol of their widowhood will you feel avenged."[2] In another poem Ollaiyūrthantha Bhūta Pāndyan, himself a poet, sings thus: "If I do not win in this war may my dearly beloved wife leave me, may my kingdom go to a tyrant and I myself lose all friends-I who have seen and moved with such great friends as Ānthai, Antuvanchātan, Āthanaḻiśi and Eyakkan"[3]

The picture of universal love painted for us in these classics is at the same time not less astonishing. The famous lines of Kaṇian Pūnkunran, which bind the whole of humanity in hoops of love, are to be remembered by all men for all times, because he assigns unimpeachable argument for his saying so, since "neither good nor bad comes to us from outside", but always reside within us.[4] Instances of men loving each other unto death are seen sometimes but of the example of a person who died on hearing of his friend's death could be seen only in these heroic days of valour and love.

1. *See for example* Puram, 312
2. Puram, 25.
3. Ibid., 71.
4. Puram, 192.

Our ancients conceived everything on a very high plane. If sex-love would appear to have been carried too far, they give the same kind of treatment to charity, heroism, valour, justice, learning and the fine arts. Śilappadikāram gives us the classical example of a king dying on learning he had been unjust and all our poems of the period describe both the king's council and the village assembly as impeccable instruments of justice. The Kural pitched so high the idea of neighbourly trust and love that it said, "One ought to take poison even after seeing it poured not to offend the feelings of the neighbour". The following two couplets of the same work are also equaly characteristic:

> Do not even look at your guest with the slightest displeasure for he is a dainty flower that would fade with the slightest smell".—Kural, 90

> "The wealth of the upright dwindles not but passes on to posterity".—Kural, 112.

II. Learning

The poets found in the two great collections of the Saṅgam age-the Eṭṭuthogai and Pattuppāttu-alone number 473 (besides 102 anonymous persons) with 2279 poems to their credit. Of these nearly 50 are women poets. These very numbers ought to give one an idea of the state of learning during the period. Some of these poets like Murānjiūr Mudināgarāyar are dated very early in the centuries before Christ which would make us predicate a long period of cultural height in the Tamil country which the modern historian may not suspect. The wonderful standard of learning adumbrated by the author of the Kural and in particular the striking way in which he describes the ideal eagerness to study cannot fail to bring home the reader the truth of this statement. In Kural 395 the learned poet says:

> "Eager like the beggar in front of the rich ought to be the seeker after wisdom in front of the learned".

In Kural 394 he lays down the principle, which the great Prophet Muhammad said nearly 500 years after, "Learn-

ing is an ornament among friends ". To the men accustomed to the cycle of seven births Vaḷḷuvar holds out learning as a guide through all the births and rebirths through which man has to pass and concludes that the precious undecaying wealth of a man it after all his learning.[1]

Learning was considered as a necessary qualification for life It was considered even more so in an administrator. As pointed out earlier many kings of the times were learned and some of them were even poets. It was the universal custom among our ancient kings to patronise the learned and listen to their advice. A poet in the Patiṟṟuppattu collection was given 500 villages for his maintenance. Kapilar was taken to a mountain top and was given as many villages as he could see. Rudran Kaṇṇanār, the author of Paṭṭinappālai, was given 16 lakhs of gold coins for the poem sung in praise of Karikāla.[2] Puram 150 speaks of a small chieftain of Thōttimalai in Malainādu who gave his jewelled necklace and gold bracelet to an unknown poet who had come seeking his help and Puram 165 describes to us the generosity of Kumaṇan, a Kongu chief, to Perunthalaichātanār to whom he offered his very head on which his brother, who had exiled him, had set a price.

Certain poets had attached themselves to cartain rulers. Such were Kapilar attached to Pāri, Mōśi to Āy, Poygaiyar to the Chēra Kaṇaikāl Irumporai, Māngudi Maruthan to Pāṇḍyan Neduñjeliyan and so on. Certain kings had become so attached to learning that they ordered the collection of the poems sung in their times. Thus Naṟṟinai was collected under orders of Pāṇḍyan Māran vaḷudi, Kuruntogai under orders of Pūrikkō. Aiñkurunūru by the Chēra of the elephant look, Agam by Pāṇḍyan Ugraperuvaḷuthi and Paripādal by the orders of Ilamperuvaḷuthi. We have evidenee that many of these kings

1. Kural, 398, 400.
2. In all this a certain amount of exaggeration may reside. Still they do point to the trend of the times.

presided over the Tamil academies of their day and were the moving spirit of the learning of the times.

There were besides the academy other centres of discussion as well and one such centre is mentioned in Manimēkhalai as *pattimanram.*[1] Prof. T. P. Meenakshisundaram Pillai dilating on this subject compares them to the *Vidva-parishads* of modern times and says that this typified "the earnest quest for truth which symbolised the age".[2] Tamil was divided into three kinds-the *iyal*, *iśai* and *nātakam* (prose, poetry and drama respectively). and three separate grammars regulating the usage in the three different departments were made. Dr. U. V. Swaminatha Iyer indeed speaks of three kinds of academies to represent the three kinds of Tamil.[3]

It is a difficult question to answer as to whether there were centres of learning such as the schools as we have to day. We have no indication at all in the Śaṅgam poems of the existence of such schools; and yet we are sure that a certain level of culture was maintained. The education of our ancients seems to have come to them naturally with a little self effort except in rare cases where poets and grammarians took to themselves a few disciples. The classic example is that of Tolkāppiyar himself who was a disciple of Agastya.[4] We also find sometimes one poet making a reverential mention of another as in the case of Peruñsiteranār mentioning Mōśi, Peruñkunṟūrkiḻar mentioning Kapilar and Mārōkkem Nappaśalaiyār who also refers to the same as "Kapilar who knows not untruth" (poyyānāvir Kapilan). It may be surmised from this that the custom of learning from great poets was prevalent during the period.

Kuruntogai 33 indeed uses the word, *mānākkan* (student), in the very same way in which we use it to-day. The reference here is to *pāṇan* who had been sent to a lady by her lord to settle her grievance against him and

1. Mani., II, 61.
2. Tamil Culture, I, 38.
3. Sanga Tamil, 20.
4. Tolkappiyam, pāyiram.

the lady on meeting him admires his learning, "though he appears still like a young student" (*ivanō iḻamānākkan*). "if he talks to me so well in our place, which ought to be to him" the lady continues, "how well he would acquit himself in the *manram* of his own place".[1] From this a few facts become clear, namely that besides the poets the *pānars* also functioned as teachers, that they underwent a period of training for this purpose and that in every village the *manram* functioned as a school. The custom of approaching the school teacher for counsel, which subsists in the south Indian village to this day, must be thus taken to have a long history going back to the days of the Saṅgam. The *pānar* did in early times many things which the village school-masters do to-day in the village and there seems to be ample ground to consider the *pānar* as the educator of the community in the age of the Saṅgam. Reference to the volubility of this tribe of people has already been made and everyone from the king downwards patronised them. Thus arose works like *Perumpānārruppadai* and *Sirupānārruppadai* and they represent the important place these wandering minstrels held in the cultural society of South India during this period.

Nor should this surprise us. Mr. C. M. Bowra in his book *Heroic Poetry* explains how in early times the Huns, Celts and the Saxons learnt the rudiments of their culture only from men of this kind, a set of wandering bards who served as teachers of these incipient races of men. Kings and chiefs, we are told, vied with each other in presenting these men with bags of gold, jewels and extensive lands of which we find the counterpart mentioned in our poems in the shape of golden flowers, elephants, chariots and lands.[2] That this was so in the north of India is also clear from the history of Sanskrit literature in which the *sūtas* analogous to the *pānar* of the south have played a large part in early times

It is in spite of all these crude methods in which

1. Kuruntogai, 33, line, 2.
2. Bowra; *Heroic Poetry*. 40 ff, Puram, 11, 12, 29, 69, 224 etc. See Also G. Murray *The Classical Tradition*, 46.

knowledge was conveyed and propagated that the Tamils exhibit through their extant works a well developed science of knowledge. The division of the country into five regional divisions according to their fertility as seen in *Tolkāppiyam* does not stop there. The grammarian proceeds on his systematisation and states the differences in seasons, the *flora* and the *fauna* and the nature of sex-love in each of these regions.[1] The variations at sunrise and sunset and in between, in each of these regions is stated with such accuracy that it is easy for us to conclude that it should not have been difficult for the men of the various regions to know the time at any given moment.

Though the ancient Tamils used some kind of hour-glass to calculate time (*nāligaivaṭṭil*), they found out the hour correctly from the manifestations of the *flora* of the region. A writer in the *Benares Central Hindu College Magazine* for December, 1908 calculating on the evidence of our poems gives the main timings as follows :

Flowering of lotus at sunrise			
,, ,,	shanbagam at	6-7	A.M.
,, ,,	plaintain flower		
,, ,,	at	5-6	P.M.
,, ,,	pavaḷamalligai		
,, ,,	at	6-7	P.M.
,, ,,	jasmine at	7-8	P.M.

The Saṅgam poems give us even further indications of time by following the fllowers. When the *Iruvātchi* flowered or the *nochi* dropped from the tree it was midnight.[2] They also knew the seasons in their round by looking at the flowers. Thus the flowering of the *pāthiri* bespoke the coming of summer and that of konrai, of the rainy season.

The ancient Tamils knew the month as the period taken by the moon to wax and wane. Thus in *Maduraik-kāñji* is described " the commencement of the dark fort-night when the waning of the full moon begins."[3] We have in the Saṅgam works names of months like *Ādi*

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1. The grammarian describes them respectively as the *muthal, karu* and *Uripporuḷ*.
2. See for example, *Kuruntogai*, 138.
3. Maduraikkāñji, 194.

and *Thai* and also the names of stars like *Kārthigai* and *Parani* (aḻarkūttam).[1]

Even the science of astronomy was not unknown to these people. That the twin epics mention astronomical details for events narrated in them has been noted in an earlier chapter. In Puram, 221 the position of stars and planets is given for the fall of a meteor in the reign of the Chera of the elephant look. In ode, 229 Kūdalūrkiḻār describes elaborately the point in the sky where he saw a shooting star. In Agam, 313 the setting of the sun is described with reference to the moon being swallowed up by the serpent and so on.

III. The Fine Arts

In south India from the early times the kinds of arts have been numbered as 64. It was so even in the days of the Śaṅgam. *Manimēkhalai* speaks of the arts specified for women in family life and according to the same work those who were outside the bounds of family life belonged to two classes, public women and courtesans and prostitutes.[2] The commentaries of the Śaṅgam works give us an idea of works that had existed in and around their time with regard to the numerous arts that were practised during the period. Some dealt with medicine, some with incantation, some with theft (considered as an art) and some others with the art of protection, some with dreams, some with omens, some with snakes, some with horses and some others with elephants, some with cooking, some with wells and yet others with engineering and astronomy. This powerful galaxy of subjects treated give the reader an idea of the cultural background in which the Tamils of the Śaṅgam age lived.[3]

Still the great arts that did credit to these people were painting, dancing and singing. *Manimēkhalai* makes

1. Sil., XXIII, 133; Puram, 70, Naṟṟinai, 80 etc.
2. Swaminatha Iyer; Op., cit., pp. 109-10.
3. Maduraikkāñji, 634 and the comment thereon; Sil., XVI, 166-9 and the comment thereon. See Mani., II. 22, where a work on cooking is mentioned.

particular mention of a work on painting.[1] Reference has also been made in an earlier chapter to the numerous examples of painting that are mentioned in the poems of the period. Though the works of art thus mentioned have all perished beyond recovery the evidences at our command make us believe that they must have been really works of a high standard. One poet informs us that the painter first created the object of his painting in his mind and then translated the ideal into the picture.[2] From the figures of gods to the painting of natural scenes many pictures were drawn both on walls and on canvas[3] Pictures were particularly drawn on the walls of temples. *Paṭṭinappālai* refers to pictures on the temple walls in Puhār covered by the dust of chariots on the road.[4] The Buddhists and Jains particularly took care to adorn the walls of their *vihāras* in this manner. *Manimēkhalai* refers to this while describing the Buddhist temples in Kānchi and *Maduraikkāñji* refers in like manner to the Jain *bastis* in Madurai.[5] The custom of painting the walls of private houses was also prevalent and rich men seldom failed to have recourse to this form of adornment. It is said in these poems that visitors to Puhār marvelled at the pictures drawn on the outer walls of houses.[6] Sometimes astronomical figures representing position of planets were drawn. Such was the drawing on the balconies of the royal cot at Madurai on which king Neduñjeḷiyan slept.[7] There were shops which sold paintings both in Puhār and Madurai as indicated earlier and there were also public places where good paintings were exhibited as in a museum. The description of the pictures preserved in Tiruparañkunram to which reference is made in *Paripādal*[8] indeed reminds one of a museum of pictures.

1. Mani., II, 30-31.
2. Ibid., V, 7.
3. Maduraikkāñji, 516; Mani., III, 128-29.
4. Paṭṭinappalai, 48.
5. Mani., XXVIII, 67; Maduraikkāñji, 485.
6. Mani., III, 127-31.
7. Nedunalvādai, 159-61.
8. Paripadal. XIX, 48-53.

Painting and dancing were considered as related arts in the Śaṅgam days. In the reference above quoted from *Manimēkhalai* to the existence of a work on painting it is particularly mentioned that painting was one of the necessary equipments of a dancer:

> " nātaka magalirkku nankanam vakutha
> ōviya chennūl urainurkidakkaiyum "
>
> —Manimēkhalai, II, 30=31.

The reason why these two arts were related is indicated by the commentator Adiyārkkunallār, when he describes the nine kinds of poses in dancing that a true understanding of them came to a dancer only from an effective knowledge of painting in which the poses were pictorially described. The dancer had therefore necessarily to study works on painting to get the proper poses correctly.[1] *Śilappadikāram* gives such great details about dancing and singing that it leaves one in no doubt as to the supreme position that these two arts held in this period. In this work the author describes the dance of Siva-the dance called *kottichēdam*-so well that it brings before our mind's eye the actual dance itself.[2] In another place the author of this epic tells us that Mādhavi was well versed in dancing and had trained herself to it from her fifth year.[3] In the same connection eleven kinds of dances are referred to in this work as having been widely prevalent during the period.

The other Śaṅgam works also do not fail to portray the cultural state of the times in which dancing held a very high place. They generally speak of two kinds of dances-the *tuṇangai* and the *kuravai*. The first kind was played both by men and women. *Tirumurugārruppadai* gives us an idea of this dance when it describes it as " played by ladies who bent their arms and kept beating their sides with them ". This was played by men also apparently in the same manner. From the poen *Patiṟṟuppattu* we learn that even

1. Sil., VIII, 25 and the comment thereon.
2. Ibid. XXVIII, 70ff.
3. Ibid. III, 7ff.

kings on the battlefield celebrated their victory "by raising high their strong shoulders and dancing the *tuṅangai* beating the sides of the body with bent arms".[1] The *kuravai* was generally the Tamil dance of victory. It was also played to propitiate the gods as we find in *Āichiyarkuravai* and *Kunrakkuravai* mentioned in *Śilappadikāram*. The *Patiṛṛuppāttu* has the following description of the *kuravai* danced by the king.

> "The powerful drum was beaten; the sword was raised aloft by the bejewelled king, who wore the *ulinai* creeper made of gold."[2]

The dance was a very common form of enjoyment or worship among all, the high and low. Kūtha Śākkiyan's dance of Śiva has been mentioned; that the kings danced as common men the *kuravai* and *tuṇangai* has been pointed out earlier; we learn from *Tirumurugārrubpadai* that the *tuṅangai* was a dance beloved of even the demons. Such was the lure of the dance in those days that the whole of Tamilnad seems to have bcen traversed by bands of the dancers called the *kūthar* and the *porunar* with their female partners called the *viraliyar*. They carried with them numberless musical instruments. Hence arose many poems in ancient literature of the Tamils which sought to introduce them to patrons. Thus arose the *āṛṛuppadāi* literature of the times,*Porunarāṛṛuppadai*, the *Perumpāṇāṛṛuppadai* and *Śirupānaṛṛuppadai*. Dr. U. V. Swaminatha Iyer indeed describes *Malaipadukadām* as *Kūtharāṛṛuppadai*. It is in this work that reference is made to the large number of instruments carried by these wandering minstrels and it is beautifully described by instituting a comparison between the minstrel with his instruments and the jackfruit tree from which many jackfruits hang on everyside. In Puram, 152 is a description of the commencement of the *kūthu* by the strolling dancers:

> "Virali, while I sing beat the drums, tune the *yāl*, beat on the hautboy, sound the cymbals, beat the small drum (aguḷi), tap

1. Patiṛṛuppattu, 45.
2. Ibid., 56 (Trans. by P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar)

the *pathalai* on one side ; give me the rod of cassia ".[1]

Malaipadukadam refers to the background music supplied by the *viraliyar* to the song of the *kuthar*. Of these men the *porunar* were especially respected. They were used to encourage the army, sing the glory of the victory won by the king and for carrying royal messages. Some lived by praising the kings and others, the *Vellālar* or the cultivating class.

If painting was related to dancing, acting was even more so in relation to dance. It is from dance that drama ought to have been born and in early times the two were rarely distinguished. If the Indus valley finds give us an idea of the age of dancing we may fairly have an idea of the age of drama also. It must be noted that it is in South India that we find these two arts developed as early as the Śaṅgam times and even if the Dravidian character of the Indus valley civilisation is not otherwise proved the antiquity of the dance in South India must give a broad hint in that direction. Numerous works bearing on the nature of the dance were undoubtedly in existence in South India from very early times, so early indeed that most of these works, if not all, have now vanished beyond recall. We are fortunate atleast in having reference to them in later works like the commentary of Adiyārkkunallār to Śilappadikāram.[2] This makes us understand not merely the antiquity but also the highly scientific way in which dance and drama were staged in the age of our study.

An idea of what is stated here can be gathered from *Śilappadikāram* alone in which the various components of good acting are mentioned.[3] The two commentaries which the work bears explain what is stated in the original in such a minute way that we are in a position to understand the highly scientific character of the dramatic art in the days of the Śaṅgam. To give but an example, nine kinds of expression of feeling are mentioned as necessary

1. Trans. by P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Hist. of the Tamils.*
2. Sil., III and the commentary thereon.
3. Ibid., III. 12-25 and the long comments thereon.

for an actor-valour, fear, shame, wonder, joy, sorrow, mirth, justice and anger-and twenty-four kinds of acting are described in the same work. To show how the commentator explains himself we may point out the example of the distinction made in the commentary between shivering in rain and shivering in dew, between a respectful greeting and a greeting of worship etc. Under the same reference the epic author mentions the place of music and instruments of music like the drum etc.

Music held a very high place in the culture of the Śaṅgam days. *Kalithokai* mentions that even the gigantic elephant and the crafty snake would respect music and lie enchanted by it-a sight common in our country to-day and this statement only gives its age-old history. But the same work goes further and tells us that even thiefs roaming about the *pālai* land would throw down their arms on hearing the music of the *yāl.*

Though music is not as ancient as dance or drama there is no doubt it rose into use sufficiently early, since the old grammars, the *Agattiyam* and the *Tolkāppiyam* know *iśai* (music) as a part of the language and Śilappadikāram exposes most intricate points in the science of music like the origin of the *rāga*, the nature of the *paṇ* etc. The *paṇ* in early times was divided into four kinds-pālai, kuriñji, marutham and śevvaḷi. Each of these *paṇs* was further divided iuto *purams*. Thus *devali* was the *puram* of *Pālai*; *senthu*, the *puram* of *Kuriñji*, *agari*, a *puram* of *marutham* and *Velavali*, a *puram* of *śevvaḷi.*[1] A song as it began was divided into four stages beginning with *uggiram* and ending with *pirakalai.*[2] The expatiation goes on in this manner until we come to a stage in which the scientific music is complete.

The musicians of the Śaṅgam times observed certain rules and regulations. Certain *paṇs* were sung only at certain times. The *śevvaḷi* was sung in the morning. *Maduraikkāñji* refers to the marutham that was played on the *yāl* in the morning time at Madurai[3] and

1. Sil., XIV, 160-67.
2. Ibid., III, 150 and the comments thereon.
3. Maduraikkāñji, 658.

Puram sings of the musicans who sang the two *paṇs* in the reverse timings because they were beside themselves with joy having been sumptuously rewarded by Nalli.[1] In the same way certain *paṇs* were specially sung in certain regions. "Kuriñji was sung in the hilly region and even the elephant was entranced" so sings an ode in *Agam*. The songs for play were of a particular variety. Thus arose the *ūśalvari* for singing while playing on the swing, *kanthukavari* for singing while playing the ball, *āṟṟuvari* for singing while bathing etc.

Reference has been made to shops of musical instruments at Madurai conveyed to us by *Śilāppādikārām*. These instruments were divided into three kinds-those made of leather like drums, those which were played through holes like the flute and those which were played on strings like *yāl*. The drum variety alone had nearly 20 kinds like bērigai, padāgam, udukkai, mathaḻam, śallikai and karadigai.

1. Puram, 148.

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